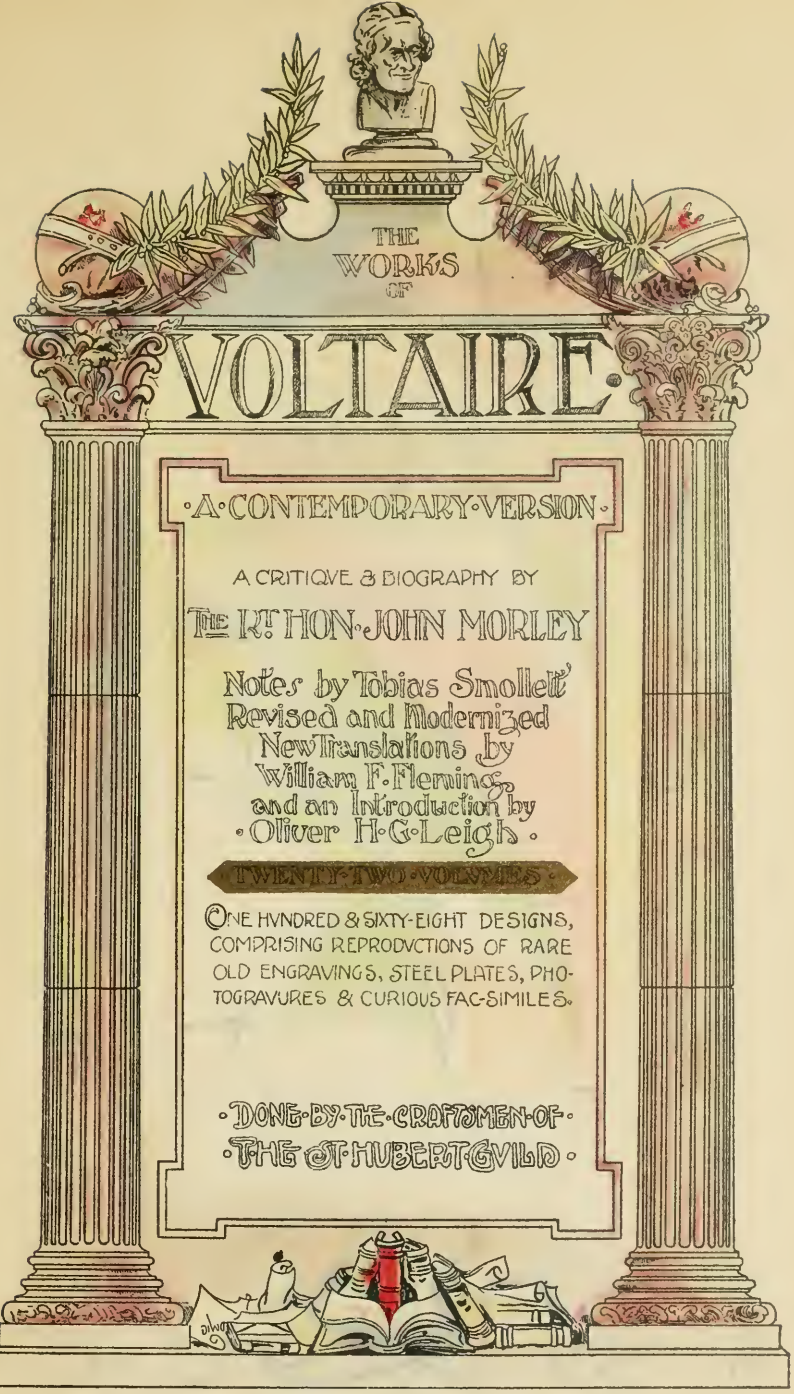
RARY
ERSITY OF
IFORNIA
N DIEGO

The WORKS of VOLTAIRE

*"Between two servants of Humanity, who appeared eighteen hundred years apart, there is a mysterious relation. * * * * Let us say it with a sentiment of profound respect: JESUS WEPT: VOLTAIRE SMILED. Of that divine tear and of that human smile is composed the sweetness of the present civilization."*

VICTOR HUGO.

"GREAT HENRY SHONE AMID THE LAM-
BENT FLAMES
ENCIRCLED ROUND WITH GLORY'S
GOLDEN BEAMS"



THE WORKS OF

VOLTAIRE

A CONTEMPORARY VERSION

A CRITIQVE & BIOGRAPHY BY

THE RT HON JOHN MORLEY

Notes by Tobias Smollett
Revised and Modernized
New Translations by
William F. Fleming
and an Introduction by
Oliver H.G. Leigh

TWENTY-TWO VOLUMES

ONE HVNDRED & SIXTY-EIGHT DESIGNS, COMPRISING REPRODVCTIONS OF RARE OLD ENGRAVINGS, STEEL PLATES, PHOTOGRAVURES & CURIOUS FAC-SIMILES.

DONE BY THE CRAFTSMEN OF THE ST HUBERT GVILD

Copyright, 1901,
By E. R. DuMont

Owned by
The St. Hubert Guild
New York

VOLTAIRE

THE HENRIADE: LETTERS AND MISCELLANIES

VOL. XXI — PART I

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	5
CANTO I	9
CANTO II	23
CANTO III	38
CANTO IV	53
CANTO V	70
CANTO VI	83
CANTO VII	96
CANTO VIII	115
CANTO IX	132
CANTO X	144
LETTERS	161
MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS	231

LIST OF PLATES

Part I

PAGE

"Great Henry Shone Amid the Lambent Flames" . . . . . *Frontispiece*

Fac-simile Letter of Voltaire . . 230

INTRODUCTION.

"The Henriade," the only French epic, was begun when the author was a prisoner in the Bastille. The second Canto, describing the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day, came to Voltaire in a dream, so he told his friend Wagnière, adding that he retained the lines until he had the chance to write them and "he never found anything to change in it." The poem was ten years in the making. It was ready for printing in 1723, when he was in his thirtieth year. He had received a number of subscriptions for it before he realized that the tone of the Dedication and the poem would bring it under the ban of the censors.

The Dedication is unique of its kind. The young king, Louis XV., had just attained his majority.

"SIRE: Every work in which the great deeds of Henry IV. are spoken of, ought to be offered to your majesty. It is the blood of that hero which flows in your veins. You are king only because he was a great man, and France, that wishes you as much virtue as he possessed, and more happiness, flatters itself that the life and the throne which you owe to him will engage you to imitate him.

"Fortunate in having known adversity, he felt for the miseries of men, and softened the rigors of a rule from which he had suffered himself. Other kings have courtiers; he had friends. His heart was full of tenderness for his true servants.

"That king, who truly loved his subjects, never regarded their complaints as sedition, nor the remonstrance of magistrates as encroachment upon the sovereign authority. Shall I say it, sire? Yes; truth commands me so to do. It is a thing very shameful to kings, this astonishment we experience when they sincerely love the happiness of their people. May you one day accustom us to regard that virtue as something appertaining to your crown! It was the true love of Henry IV. for France which made him adored by his subjects."

The poem was a brilliant protest against intolerance by the powers of Church and State. How, then, could itself be tolerated? The "privilege" of publication was denied. By the help of friends it was secretly printed in Rouen in 1724. It was smuggled into Paris and had an instant success, as "a wonderful work, a masterpiece of the mind, as beautiful as Virgil." It has had a lasting popularity in seven languages. The English edition appeared in 1728 as "the first edition published with the author's sanction." This time the author dedicated "The Henriade" to Queen Caroline, whose husband had been one year king of England. She had been the friend of Sir Isaac Newton when Princess of Wales.

To the Queen:

"MADAM: It was the lot of Henry the Fourth to be protected by an English queen. He was assisted by the great Elizabeth, who was in her age the glory of her sex. By whom can his memory be so well protected as by her who resembles so much Elizabeth in her personal virtues?

"Your majesty will find in this book bold, impartial truths; morality unstained with superstition; a spirit of liberty, equally abhorrent of rebellion and of tyranny; the rights of kings always asserted and those of mankind never laid aside.

"The same spirit in which it was written gave me the confidence to offer it to the virtuous consort of a king who, among so many crowned heads, enjoys the almost inestimable honor of ruling a free nation: a king who makes his power consist in being beloved, and his glory in being just.

"Our Descartes, who was the greatest philosopher in Europe before Sir Isaac Newton appeared, dedicated his "Principles" to the celebrated Princess Palatine Elizabeth; not, said he, because she was a princess (for true philosophers respect princes, but never flatter them); but because of all his readers she understood him the best, and loved truth the most.

"I beg leave, madam (without comparing myself to Descartes), to dedicate "The Henriade" to your majesty

upon the like account, not only as the protectress of all arts and sciences, but as the best judge of them.

"I am, with that profound respect which is due to the greatest virtue as well as the highest rank, may it please your majesty, your majesty's most humble, most dutiful and most obliged servant, VOLTAIRE.

The publication enriched its author, who was presented with two thousand crowns by the king and received other honors. "The Henriade" was at last "privileged" to be sold in France, in 1731. Frederick of Prussia wrote a glowing preface for a sumptuous edition he produced at lavish expense, in which he pronounced "The Henriade" the greatest of all epics, ancient or modern.

THE HENRIADE

LETTERS AND MISCELLANIES.

THE HENRIADE.

CANTO I.

The Argument.

Henry III., joined by Henry de Bourbon, King of Navarre, against the League, having blockaded Paris, sends Henry de Bourbon privately into England, in hopes of obtaining aid from Queen Elizabeth. A violent storm overtaking him in his voyage, he is obliged to put into an island, where an old hermit receives him, and foretells his change of religion, and accession to the throne. Description of England, and its government.

The chief renowned,[1] who ruled in France, I sing,
By right of conquest and of birth, a king;
In various sufferings resolute and brave,
Faction he quelled: he conquered, and forgave.
Subdued the dangerous League, and factious Mayenne,[2]
And curbed the headstrong arrogance of Spain.

[1] Henry IV., of France, son of Anthony, King of Navarre, who descended in a direct line from Robert, Count de Clermont, youngest son of Louis IX., or St. Louis of France. The posterity of his eldest son, Philip the Bold, failing in Henry III., three hundred years after the death of St. Louis, Henry de Bourbon became heir to the crown, as descended from the above-mentioned Count de Clermont, who married Beatrix, daughter of Agnes de Bourbon, heir of Arehemband, Lord of Bourbon in the middle of the thirteenth century.

[2] Charles, Duke of Mayenne, brother of Henry, Duke of Guise, who formed the League, a faction in France; who, under pretence of danger to the Church, made head against Henry III. of France, and, after his death, against Henry de Bourbon, who gained great advantage over the Spaniards in confederacy with the League.

He taught those realms he conquered to obey,
And made his subjects happy by his sway.
O heaven-born truth, descend, celestial muse,
Thy power, thy brightness in my verse infuse.
May kings attentive hear thy voice divine,
To teach the monarchs of mankind is thine.
'Tis thine to war-enkindling realms to show
What dire effects from cursed divisions flow.
Relate the troubles of preceding times;
The people's sufferings, and the princes' crimes.
And O! if fable may her succors lend,
And with thy voice her softer accents blend;
If on thy light her shades sweet graces shed,
If her fair hand e'er decked thy sacred head,
Let her with me through all thy limits rove,
Not to conceal thy beauties, but improve.
Valois[1] then governed the distracted land,
Loose flowed the reins of empire in his hand:
Rights were confounded, laws neglected bore
No force, alas! for Valois reigned no more.
No more the prince for deeds of war renowned,
Whom as her son victorious conquest owned;
Whose arms through Europe spread disordered fear,
Whose loyal subjects shed the pious tear,
When the bleak North proclaimed him truly great,
And laid her crowns and sceptres at his feet.
Those rays of glory, erst in battle won,
Sank into night, and vanished from the throne.
There sat the monarch in the lap of ease,
Reclining fondly in the arms of peace;

[1] Henry III., King of France, one of the principal heroes of this poem, is always called Valois, the name of the royal branch to which he belonged.

Too weak to bear in each lethargic hour,
The regal diadem, and weight of power.
Voluptuous youths usurped the sole command,
And reigned, in truth, the sovereigns of the land.
Pleased in their soft luxurious prince to find
Corrupted morals, and a female mind.
Meantime the Guises rose at fortune's call;
And built their schemes of greatness on his fall.
Thence sprang the League, which proved the fatal source
Of numerous ills, and baffled all his force.
The servile crowd, with vain chimeras fed,
Too blindly followed where the tyrants led.
Now from the Louvre see the monarch fly,
No faithful friend, no kind protection nigh;
All had been lost, but warlike Bourbon[1] came,
Whose generous soul was fraught with virtue's flame.
'Twas his the royal sacrifice to save,
And teach once more the monarch to be brave.
The kings to Paris with their troops advance,
The eyes of Europe all are fixed on France.
Rome takes the alarm, her fears the Spaniards share,
And wait with dread the issue of the war.
High on the walls inhuman Discord stood,
Eager for slaughter, and athirst for blood;
Through all the city raged, nor raged in vain,
But drove to arms the hostile League, and Mayenne:
Through Church and State, the deadly poison spread,

[1] Henry IV. is called indifferently throughout the poem either Bourbon, or Henry. He was born at Pau in Béarn, December 13, 1553.

And called the proud Iberia to her aid.
This savage monster scenes of horror loves,
And plagues the votaries whom her soul approves.
She racks and galls the slaves her chains confined,
And riots in the torments of mankind.
Westward of Paris, where the winding Seine
Adorns each meadow with eternal green,
Where oft the Graces and the Muses play,
The troops of Valois shone in dread array.
There, whom religion swayed by different laws
Revenge united in their sovereign's cause.
A thousand chiefs stood forth at Bourbon's word,
Love joined their hearts, and valor drew the sword.
With joy they followed the bright paths of fame,
But one their leader, and their Church the same.
Immortal Louis [1] eyed him from above
With all the fondness of parental love:
Virtues he saw which Gallia's king might grace,
And future glories worthy of his race.
Charmed with his courage, yet he grieved to find
Such weak discernment in so brave a mind:
Would gladly guide him to the throne of truth,
And wished to check the errors of his youth.
But valiant Henry gained the regal crown,
And rose by measures to himself unknown.
Louis was present from his blest abode
To lead the youthful hero in his road.
Full oft unseen the kind assistance came,
That toils and dangers might augment his fame.
Oft had our walls beheld with martial rage

[1] St. Louis, the ninth of that name, King of France, from whom the Bourbon branch was descended.

In doubtful war the embattled ranks engage.
The plains were desolate, and carnage spread
From shore to shore her mountains of the dead,
When Valois thus addressed the chief with sighs,
And tears of sorrow streaming from his eyes:
"See to what height thy monarch's ills are grown,
There read the faithful portrait of thy own.
With equal hate the factious Leaguers join
To strike at Bourbon's glory, and at mine.
Seditious Paris, with a proud disdain,
Rejects the present, and the future reign.
The ties of blood, the laws, each generous care
That fills thy soul, proclaims thee lawful heir.
Great are thy virtues, and, I blush to own,
For this would Paris drive thee from the throne.
Nay, more, to show that heaven approves the deed,
Religion heaps her curses on thy head.
Rome without armies distant nations awes,
Spain hurls her thunder, and asserts her cause.
Friends, subjects, kindred, in this evil day,
Or basely fly, or proudly disobey.
Rich is the harvest of Iberia's gains,
Who pours her legions on my desert plains.
Perchance, the succors of a foreign force
May stop the impending danger in its course.
Britannia's queen may lend the friendly aid,
And mutual terror may our foes invade.
What, though eternal jealousy and pride
Oppose our interest, and our hearts divide,
When life's severest ills have been endured,
My glory blasted, and my fame obscured,
When vile affronts have made my honor poor,
My subjects, and my country are no more,

Who comes these proud insulters to control
Is most my friend, and dearest to my soul.
No common, listless agent will I trust,
Be thou my envoy in a cause so just.
On thee my fortune in the war depends,
Thy merit only can procure me friends."

Thus Valois spoke, and Bourbon heard with grief
The new designs, and counsels of the chief.
His great and generous mind disdained to yield
Thus to divide the glory of the field.
There was a time when conquest met his arm,
And all those honors which the brave can charm:
When strong in power, unaided by intrigue,
Himself, with Condé,[1] quelled the trembling League.
Yet, in obedience to the king's command,
He left his laurels, and withdrew his hand.
The troops, amazed, with restless ardor burn,
Their fate, their fortune wait on his return.
The absent hero still preserved his fame,
The guilty city shuddered at his name:
Each moment thought the mighty warrior near,
With death and desolation in his rear.

He through the plains of Neustria bends his way,
Attended only by his friend Mornay,[2]
Mornay, too good to flatter, or deceive,
The cause of error too averse to leave.
By zeal and prudence studious to advance

[1] Henry, Prince of Condé. He was the hope of the Protestant party: and died at Saint-Jean d'Angély, aged thirty-five years, in 1685.

[2] Duplessis-Mornay; the bravest, and most virtuous person belonging to the Protestant party. When Henry IV. changed his religion, Mornay reproached him in the severest manner, and retired from court. He was called the pope of the Huguenots.

Alike the interest of his Church and France,
The courtier's censor, but at court beloved,
Rome's greatest foe, and yet by Rome approved.
Between two rocks, which hoary ocean laves
And beats with all the fury of his waves,
The port of Dieppe meets the hero's eyes,
And crowds of eager mariners supplies.
Their hands prepare the vessels for the main,
Those sovereign rulers of the azure plain.
The stormy Boreas, fast-enchained in air,
Leaves the smooth sea to softer Zephyr's care.
Their anchor weighed, they swiftly quit the strand,
And soon descry Britannia's happy land.
When lo! the day's bright star is hid in clouds,
And gathering whirlwinds whistle through the shrouds.
Heaven gives her thunder, waves on waves arise,
And floods of lightning burst from all the skies.
Death mounts the storm, and foaming billows show
The king of terrors to the sailors' view.
Nor death, nor dangers Bourbon's soul annoy;
His country's sorrows all his cares employ;
For her he casts the longing look behind,
The storm accuses, and condemns the wind.
Less generous warmth the Roman's breast inspired,
By love of conquest, and ambition fired,
When, launching boldly from Epirus' coast,
By angry seas and furious surges tossed,
He dared his mightier fortune to oppose
To all the power of Neptune, and his foes:
Firm, and convinced that no impending doom
Could snatch its monarch from the world, and Rome.

'Twas then that Being, infinitely wise,
At whose high will all empires fall, or rise,
Who gave this world its fair and beauteous form,
Who calms the ocean, and directs the storm,
On Gallia's hero looked with pity down
From the bright radiance of His sapphire throne.
The waves, obedient to His dread command,
Conveyed the vessel to the neighboring land.
Guided by heaven, secure the hero stood
Where Jersey's isle emerges from the flood.
Near to the shore there lay a calm retreat,
By shades defended from the solar heat.
A rock, that hid the fury of the seas,
Forbade the entrance of each ruder breeze.
By nature's hand adorned, a mossy grot
Improved the beauties of this rural spot.
A holy hermit, trained in wisdom's ways,
There spent the quiet evening of his days.
Lost to the world, and all its trifling show,
His only study was himself to know.
O'er every fault his pensive mind would rove,
Which pleasure dictates, or which springs from love.
The flowery meadows, and the silver streams
Had raised his soul to more enlightened themes.
Each passion quelled in this retired abode,
His ardent wish was union with his God.
Wisdom before him spread her ample page,
And heaven protected his declining age.
She poured her purest blessings on his head,
And taught him Fate's mysterious book to read.
The hoary sage, who well our hero knew,
Whom God informed with science ever true,
Near a clear stream invites the prince to taste

The simple diet of his rural feast.
He oft had fled from vanity and care,
To humble cottages, and simpler fare;
Had bid adieu to courts, and courtly pride,
And laid the pomp of majesty aside.
In plain and useful converse much was said
Of troubles through the Christian empire spread.
Mornay unmoved determined to protect
With zealous fervor Calvin and his sect.
Henry, in doubt what precepts to believe,
Petitioned heaven one ray of light to give.
"Error," he said, "in all preceding times,
Has truth concealed, and been the nurse of crimes.
Must I then wander, and mistake the road,
Whose only confidence is placed in God?
A God, so gracious, sure will lend His aid,
And teach mankind what worship should be paid."
"Let us," replied the venerable seer,
"God's secret counsels, and designs revere.
Nor rashly think that human errors bring
Their muddy currents from so pure a spring.
Well I remember, when these aged eyes
Beheld this sect in humble weakness rise,
When, as an exile dreading human sight,
It fled for refuge to the shades of night.
By slow degrees the phantom raised her head,
And all around her baleful influence shed.
Placed on the throne, no power her force confines,
She reigns our tyrant, and o'erturns our shrines.
Far from the court, in this obscure retreat,
With sighs and tears I weep Religion's fate.
One hope remains to cheer life's dreary vale;
So strange a worship cannot long prevail:
Its new-born glory in our days shall cease,

First sprung from man, and founded in caprice.
Frail, like ourselves, all human works decay;
God sweeps their glory and their pride away.
Safe and secure His holy city stands;
Nor dreads the malice of our mortal hands.
In vain the fabric hell and time invade,
His own right arm the strong foundation laid.
On thee, great Bourbon, will He pour His light,
And chase the mists of error from thy sight.
On Valois' throne, with Providence thy shield,
Bright wilt thou shine, and all thy foes shall yield.
Through paths of glory conquest leads thy sword;
'Tis heaven's decree; the Highest gave His word.
Yet hope not rashly, in the pride of youth,
To enter Paris, uninformed by truth.
But most of love's bewitching draught beware,
The bravest hearts are conquered by the fair.
From that sweet poison guard thy manly soul;
Though passion calls, and pleasure crowns the bowl.
And when, at length, this sage advice pursued,
The factious Leaguers, and thyself subdued,
In horrid siege thy bounteous hand shall give
Life to a nation, and its strength revive;
Then all thy realms shall taste the sweets of peace,
All strife shall vanish, and all discord cease.
Then raise thine eyes to that almighty Lord
Whom erst our fathers honored and adored.
Who most preserves His image, most shall find
That virtue pleases, and that heaven is kind."
Thus spoke the seer, each word new warmth bestowed,
And Henry's soul with secret raptures glowed.
Those happy days were present to his eyes,

When God to man descended from the skies;
When virtue opened all her sacred springs,
Pronounced her oracles, and governed kings.
With tears he clasped the hermit to his breast,
And parting sighs his honest grief expressed.
Far distant scenes creative fancy drew,
And rising glories dawned upon his view.
Marks of surprise were stamped on Mornay's face,
But heaven from him withheld her gifts of grace.
The world in vain bestows the name of wise,
Where virtue beams, but error's clouds arise.
While thus the sage, enlightened from above,
Spoke to the heart, and tried the prince to move,
Charmed with his voice the listening winds subside,
Phœbus breaks forth, and ocean smooths the tide.
By him conducted, Bourbon reached the shore,
And prosperous gales the chief to Albion bore.
Soon as he saw the sea-encircled isle,
Its change of fortune made the hero smile.
Where once the public evils owed their cause
To long abuses of the wisest laws,
Where many a warrior fell of high renown,
And kings descended from the tottering throne,
A virgin queen the regal sceptre swayed,
And fate itself her sovereign power obeyed.
The wise Eliza, whose directing hand
Had the great scale of Europe at command;
And ruled a people that alike disdain
Or freedom's ease, or slavery's iron chain.
Of every loss her reign oblivion bred;
There, flocks unnumbered graze each flowery mead.
Britannia's vessels rule the azure seas,
Corn fills her plains, and fruitage loads her trees.

From pole to pole her gallant navies sweep
The waters of the tributary deep.
On Thames's banks each flower of genius thrives,
There sports the Muse, and Mars his thunder gives.
Three different powers at Westminster appear,
And all admire the ties which join them there.
Whom interest parts, the laws together bring,
The people's deputies, the peers, and king.
One whole they form, whose terror wide extends
To neighboring nations, and their rights defends.
Thrice happy times, when grateful subjects show
That loyal, warm affection which is due!
But happier still, when freedom's blessings spring
From the wise conduct of a prudent king.
"O when," cried Bourbon, ravished at the sight,
"In France shall peace and glory thus unite?"
A female hand has closed the gates of war,
Look on, ye monarchs, and adopt her care.
Your nations Discord's horrid tide o'erwhelms,
She lives, the blessing of adoring realms.
  Now at that spacious city he arrives,
Where nursed by heaven-born freedom plenty lives.
Now, mighty William's tower before him stood,
Now, fair Eliza's more august abode.
Thither he speeds, attended by Mornay,
His friend and sole associate in the way.
True heroes that love pageantry and state,
Whose glittering honors captivate the great.
For France he supplicates with humble prayers,
And native dignity each accent bears.
From honest frankness all his periods flow,
The only eloquence that soldiers know.
"Does Valois send you to the banks of Thame?"

Eliza cries, surprised at Valois's name.
"Are all your dire contentions at an end!
And you, that bitterest enemy, his friend!
Fame spread your discords, and that fame was true,
From north, to south, from Ganges, to Peru.
And does that arm, so dreaded in the fight,
Protect his honor, and maintain his right!"
"Distress," replied the chief, "our friendship gave,
The chains are broke, and Valois will be brave.
Far happier days he once was doomed to see,
Had all his confidence been placed in me.
But fears unmanly in his breast arose,
'Twas art and cowardice that made us foes.
Henceforth, the vanquished shall my aid receive,
His wrongs I punish, and his faults forgive.
This war so just may raise Britannia's fame,
'Tis thine, great queen, to signalize her name.
Let royal mercy spread her downy wings,
And crown thy virtues by defending kings."
The queen, impatient, asks him to relate
What ruthless evils harassed Gallia's state.
What springs of action had produced a change
At once so new, so wonderful, and strange.
"Full oft of bloody broils," Eliza said,
"Through Britain's isle has fame the rumor spread.
But who for certainty on fame depends,
Which light with darkness, truth with falsehood blends?
From you or Valois' friend, or conquering foe,
Those long dissensions I could wish to know.
Yourself was witness, and can best impart
What mystic ties have changed so brave a heart.

Display your martial deeds, your griefs declare,
No life more worthy of a royal ear."
"And must I then," returned the chief with sighs,
"Recall those scenes of horror to my eyes?
O would to heaven, oblivion's endless night
With thickest shades might veil them from my sight!
Must Bourbon tell of kindred princes' crimes,
And the fell madness of preceding times?
I shudder at the thought, but your command,
Respect of power forbids me to withstand.
Others, no doubt, would use refined address,
Disguise the truth, and make their errors less:
But I reject an artifice so weak,
And like a soldier, not an envoy, speak."

CANTO II.

The Argument.

Henry the Great relates to Queen Elizabeth the history of the civil wars of France. He traces them from their origin, and enters into a detail of the massacres perpetrated on St. Bartholomew's Day.

In France, great sovereign, to increase the curse,
Our ills are risen from a sacred source.
Religion, raging with inhuman zeal,
Arms every hand, and points the fatal steel.
To me however it will least belong
To prove the Romans, or Geneva wrong.[1]
Whatever names divine the parties claim,
In mad imposture they are both the same.
If in the strifes, which Europe's sons divide,
Murder and treason mark the erring side;
Since both alike in blood their hands imbrue,
Their crimes are equal, and their blindness, too.
For me, whose business is to guard the state,
I leave to heaven their vengeance and their fate.
My hand ne'er trespassed on the rights divine;
Or e'er profaned the incense of the shrine.
Perish each statesman cruel and unkind,
Who reigns despotic o'er the human mind;

[1] Several historians have described Henry IV. as wavering between the two religions; here he is described as he was, a man of honor, seriously endeavoring to inform himself, the friend of truth, the enemy of persecution, and detesting guilt wheresoever it appeared.

Who stains with blood religion's sacred word,
And kills, or gains new converts by his sword;
Presuming rashly that a gracious God
Approves the sacrifice of human blood.
Oh, would that God, whose laws I wish to know,
On Valois' court such sentiments bestow!
The Guises[1] falsely plead religion's cause,
No scruple checks them, and no conscience awes.
At me those leaders, insolent and proud,
Direct their fury, and ensnare the crowd.
These eyes have seen our citizens engage
In mutual murders, with a zealous rage:
For vain disputes have seen their pious care
Deal all around the horrid flames of war.
You know the madness of those vulgar minds
Which faction warms, and superstition blinds;
When, proudly arming in a cause divine,
No power their headstrong passion can confine.
Erst in these happy realms yourself beheld
The rising evil, and its danger quelled:
The troubled scene assumed a milder form;
Your virtuous cares subdued the gathering storm.
No reign more pleasing could I wish to see,
Your laws are flourishing, your city free.
Far other paths did Medici pursue,
Far less beloved, less merciful than you.
Moved by these tales of misery, and woe,
More of her conduct should you seek to know,

[1] Francis, Duke of Guise, commonly at that time called the Great Duke of Guise, was the father of Balafré. It was he, who with the cardinal, his brother, laid the foundations of the League. He had several great qualities, which, however, we must take care not to dignify with the name of virtues.

Myself her real character will tell,
Nor aught exaggerate, nor aught conceal.
Many have tried, but few could e'er impart
The secret counsels of so deep a heart.
Full twenty years within the palace bred,
Much to my cost, I saw the tempest spread.
The king expiring in the bloom of life
Left a free course to his ambitious wife.
Formed by her cares to empire, either son
Alike she hated when he reigned alone.[1]
Her hands, the source from whence confusion flowed,
The seeds of jealousy and discord sowed.
Her deep designs, no wild effect of chance,
To Condé Guise opposed, and France to France.[2]
By turns defending enemies and friends,
And rivals aiding for her private ends,
False to her sect, and superstition's slave,[3]
She sought each pleasure which ambition gave.
Scarce did one virtuous grace adorn her mind,
Deformed with all the vices of her kind.
Forgive the freedom of an honest heart;
You reign a stranger to your sex's art.

[1] Catherine de Medici quarrelled with her son, Charles IX., toward the latter part of his life, and afterward with Henry III. She had so openly expressed her dislike of the government of Francis II. that she was suspected, though unjustly, of having hastened the death of that king.

[2] In the memoirs of the League is contained a letter from Catherine de Medici to the Prince of Condé, in which she returns him her thanks for having taken arms against the court.

[3] When she believed that the battle of Dreux was lost, and the Protestants had gained the victory, "Well, then," she cried, "we will say our prayers in French." She was also so weak as to believe in magic; witness the talismans which were found upon her after her death.

August Eliza, blessed with every charm
That thought can fancy, or that heaven can form,
To win affection, or to guard a state,
Lives a bright pattern to the good and great.
With love and wonder all your deeds are seen,
And Europe ranks you with her greatest men.
Francis the Second, in youth's early pride,
By fate untimely joined his sire, and died.
Guise he adored, no more his years had shown,
Nor vice, nor virtue marked him for their own.
Charles, younger still, the regal name obtained,
But fear evinced, 'twas Medici that reigned.
She sought by artful policy to bring
Eternal childhood on the rising king.
A hundred battles spoke her new command,
And discord's flames were kindled by her hand.
Two rival parties she with rage inspired,
Their arms directed, and their bosoms fired.
Dreux[1] first beheld their banners wave in air,
Ill-fated theatre of horrid war!
Old Montmorency [2] near the royal tomb
Met from a warrior's arm a warrior's doom.
At Orleans Guise [3] resigned his latest breath,

[1] The battle of Dreux was the first pitched battle between the Catholic and Protestant parties. It occurred in 1562.

[2] Anne de Montmorency, a man remarkable for his obstinacy, and the most unfortunate general of his time, was taken prisoner at Pavia and at Dreux, beaten at St. Quentin by Philip II., and was at length mortally wounded at the battle of St. Denis by an Englishman named Stuart, the person who had taken him prisoner at Dreux.

[3] This is the same Francis de Guise mentioned afterward, famous for the defence of Metz against Charles V. He was besieging the Protestants in Orleans in 1563, when Poltrot de Meré shot him in the back with a pistol loaded with three poisoned balls. He was forty-four years old when he died.

A stern assassin gave the stroke of death.
My father still unwilling slave at court,[1]
Was fortune's bubble, and the queen's support;
Wrought his own fate, in battle firmly stood,
And died for those who thirsted for his blood.
Condé [2] vouchsafed a parent's aid to lend,
My surest guardian, and my truest friend.
Nursed in his camp, beneath the laurel's shade,
Amidst surrounding heroes was I bred.
Like him disdaining indolence and sloth,
Arms were the toys and playthings of my youth.
O plains of Jarnac! O unhappy day
That took my guardian and my friend away!
Condé, whose kind protection I enjoyed,
Thy murdering hand, O Montesquieu, destroyed:
Too weak, too feeble to avenge the blow,
I saw thee deal destruction on the foe.
Young and untaught, exposed to every ill,
Heaven found some hero to protect me still;
Great Condé first my steps to glory trained,

---

[1] Anthony of Bourbon, King of Navarre, the father of Henry IV., was of a weak and unsettled temper. He quitted the Protestant religion, in which he was born, just when his wife renounced the Catholic. He never knew with certainty to what party or what religion he belonged. He was killed at the siege of Rouen, where he assisted the Guises, who were his oppressors, against the Protestants whom he loved. He died in 1562, at the same age as Francis de Guise.

[2] The Prince of Condé who is here meant was a brother of the King of Navarre and uncle of Henry IV. He was for a long time chief of the Protestants, and a great enemy of the Guises. He was slain after the battle of Jarnac by Montesquieu, captain of the guard to the Duke of Anjou, afterward Henry III. The Count of Soissons, son of the deceased, sought diligently after Montesquieu and his relations, that he might sacrifice them to his vengeance.

Next my good cause Coligny's[1] arm sustained:
Coligny, gracious queen! if Europe see
A virtue worthy her regard in me,
If Rome herself confess my youthful days
Not unrenowned, Coligny's be the praise.
Early I learned beneath his eye to bear
A soldier's hardships in the school of war;
His great example my ambition fired,
His counsel formed me, and his deeds inspired.
I saw him gray in arms, yet undismayed,
The general cause reclining on his aid;
Dear to his friends, respected by the foe,
Firm in all states, majestic though in woe;
Expert alike in battle and retreat,
More glorious, even more awful in defeat,
Than Gaston or Dunois in all the pride
Of war, with France and fortune at their side.
Ten years elapsed of battles lost and won,
Still on the field our well-armed legions shone;
With grief the queen her barren trophies viewed,
Our hardy troops, though vanquished, unsubdued,
And at one stroke, one fatal stroke ordained
To sweep the civil fury from the land.
Sudden new counsels in her court prevailed,
And peace was offered, when the sword had failed.
Peace! be thou witness, heaven's avenging power!
That treacherous olive how it blushed with gore;
Gods! is it then so hard a task to stray,
And shall their monarchs teach mankind the way?

---

[1] Gaspard de Coligny, admiral of France, the son of Gaspard de Coligny, marshal of France, and of Louisa de Montmorency, sister of the constable, born at Châtillon, February 16, 1516.

True to his sovereign still, devoutly true
Though he opposed her, to his country, too,
Coligny seized the happy hour to heal
Her bleeding interests, with a patriot's zeal.
Undaunted through surrounding foes he pressed,
(Suspicion seldom haunts a hero's breast)
Nor stayed, till in her own august abode,
Full in the midst before the queen we stood.
With circling arms and flowing tears she strove
To lavish o'er me even a mother's love;
Coligny's friendship was her dearest choice,
Still to be ruled by his unerring voice;
Wealth, power, and honor at his feet she laid,
Her son's indulgence to our hopes displayed,
Vain flattering hopes alas! and quickly fled.
All were not blinded by this specious show
Of cordial grace and bounty from the foe.
But Charles, still anxious to insure success,
More bounteous seemed, as they believed him less.
Trained up in falsehood from his earliest youth,
He held eternal enmity with truth;
From infant years had treasured in his heart
The poisonous precepts of his mother's art;
And fierce by nature, merciless and proud,
With ease was ripened to the work of blood.
More deeply still to veil the dark design,
By nuptial bands he made his sister mine.[1]
Oh, bands accursed, and Hymen's rites profaned,
By heaven in anger for our curse ordained,
Whose baleful torch, dire omen of our doom,
Blazed but to lead me to a mother's tomb.

[1] Margaret of Valois, sister of Charles IX., was married to Henry IV. in 1572, a few days before the massacre.

Though I have suffered let me still be just,
Nor blame thee, Medici, but where I must,
Suspicions, though on reason firmly built,
I scorn, nor need them to enhance thy guilt.
But Albret [1] died—forgive these tears I shed,
Due to the fond remembrance of the dead.
Meanwhile the dreadful hour in swift career,
Big with the queen's vindictive wrath, drew near.
Night's gloomy mantle thrown o'er earth and heaven,
Silent and still the appointed sign was given.
The moon, pale regent, faltered on her way,[2]
And sickening seemed to quench her feeble ray.
Coligny slept, and largely o'er his head
The drowsy power had all his influence shed.
Sudden unnumbered shrieks dispelled the charm,
His rallying senses felt the dread alarm;
He waked, looked forth, and saw the assassin throng
With murderous strides march hastily along:
Saw on their arms the quivering torch-light play,
His palace fired, a nation in dismay,
His bleeding household stifled in the flames,
While all the savage host around exclaims,
"Let not compassion check your righteous hands,
'Tis God, 'tis Medici, 'tis Charles commands."
Now his own name shrill echoing rends the skies,

[1] Jeanne d'Albret, mother of Henry IV., who was drawn to Paris with the rest of the Huguenots, died almost suddenly between the marriage of her son and the feast of St. Bartholomew; but Caillart, her physician, and Desnœuds, her surgeon, both zealous Protestants, who opened her body, found no marks of poison upon it.

[2] It was on the night between August 23 and 24, being the feast of St. Bartholomew in 1572, that this bloody tragedy was executed.

And now far off Teligny[1] he descries,
Teligny, famed for every virtuous grace,
Whose truth had earned his daughter's chaste embrace,
Hope of his cause, and honor of his race.
The bleeding youth by ruffians' force conveyed,
With outstretched arms demands his instant aid.
Helpless, unarmed, he saw his fate decreed,
Saw that his blood must unavenged be shed;
Yet bravely anxious for renown achieved,
Wished but to die the hero he had lived.
Already the tumultuous band explore
His own recess, and thunder at the door.
Instant he flings it wide, and meets the foe
With eye untroubled, and majestic brow,
Such as in battle with deliberate breast,
Serene, he urged the slaughter, or repressed.
Awful and sage he stood, his gracious form
Quelled the loud tumult, and controlled the storm.
"Finish, my friends, your fatal task," he said,
"Bathe in my freezing blood this hoary head,
These locks, which yet full many a boisterous year
E'en the rough chance of war has deigned to spare.
Strike, and strike deep; be satisfied and know
With my last breath I can forgive the blow,
The mean desire of life my soul abjures,
Yet happier! might I die, defending yours."
The savage band grown human at his words,
Clasping his knees let fall their idle swords;

[1] The Count de Teligny, ten months before, had married the daughter of the admiral. He had so much sweetness in his countenance, that they who came first to kill him relented at the sight, but others more barbarous did the business.

Prone on the ground his pardoning grace implore,
And at his feet repentant sorrows pour;
He in the midst, like some loved monarch rose,
Theme of his subjects' praise, and idol of their vows.
When Besme,[1] impatient for his destined prey,
Rushed headlong in, enraged at their delay;
Furious he saw the deed unfinished yet,
And each assassin trembling at his feet.
No change in him this scene of sorrow wrought,
Hard and unfeeling still, the caitiff thought,
Whoe'er relented at Coligny's fate,
Was the queen's foe, a rebel to the State.
Athwart the crowd he breaks impetuous way,
Firm stands the chief, unconscious of dismay,
Deep in his side the fierce barbarian struck
The fatal steel, but with averted look,
Lest at a glance that eye's resistless charm
Should freeze his purpose and unnerve his arm.
Such was the brave Coligny's mournful end;
Affront and outrage e'en his death attend,[2]
The ravening hawk and vulture hover round
His mangled limbs, still festering on the ground.
At the queen's feet his sacred head is thrown,
A conquest worthy both herself and son.
With brow unaltered and serene she sate,

[1] Besme was a German, a domestic of the house of Guise. This wretch being afterward taken by the Protestants, the Rochellers offered a price for him that they might tear him to pieces in the great square, but he was killed by a person named Bretanville.

[2] They suspended the admiral by the feet with an iron chain to the gibbet of Montfaucon. Charles IX. went, together with his court, to enjoy this horrid spectacle. One of his courtiers saying that the body of Coligny had an ill smell, the king answered like Vitellius: "The body of an enemy slain smells always well."

Nor seemed t'enjoy the victim of her hate;
To veil her secret thoughts so well she knew,
Such presents seemed familiar to her view.
Vain were the task and endless to recite
Each horrid scene of that disastrous night;
Coligny's death served only to presage
Our future woes, an earnest of their rage.
Legions of bigots, flushed with fiery zeal
And frantic ardor, shake the murdering steel;
Proudly they march where heaps of slaughter rise,
Unsated vengeance sparkling in their eyes.
Guise[1] in the van full many a victim paid
Indignant, to his father's injured shade;
Their leaders animate the troops aloud,
And chafe to madness the deluded crowd;
Long registers of death's foredoomed display,
And guide the poniard to its destined prey.
The tumult I omit, the deafening screams,
The blood that floated in promiscuous streams;
How on his father's corpse struck rudely down,
Convulsed with anguish fell the expiring son;
How when the flames had split the mouldering wall,
It crushed the cradled infant in its fall:
Events like these we view with less surprise,
For still they mark the track where human frenzy flies.
But stranger far, what few will e'er believe
In future ages, or yourself conceive,
The barbarous rout, whose hearts with added fire,
Those holy savages, their priests, inspire;

[1] This was Henry, Duke of Guise, surnamed Balafré, who was slain at Blois. He was the brother of Duke Francis, who was assassinated by Poltrot.

Even from the carnage call upon the Lord,
And waving high in air the reeking sword,
Offer aloud to God the sacrifice abhorred.
What numerous heroes in that havoc died!
Renel[1] and brave Pardaillan by his side,
Guerchy[2] and wise Lavardin, worthy well
A longer life and gentler fortune, fell,
Among the wretches, whom that night of woe
Plunged in the gloom of endless night below,
Marsillac[3] and Soubise,[4] marked down for death,
Defended stoutly their devoted breath,
'Till all with labor wearied and foredone,
Close to the Louvre's gate pushed roughly on,
While to their king with suppliant voice they cry,
Deaf to their prayers, he hears not, and they die.
High on the roof the royal fury stood,
At leisure feasting on the scenes of blood,
Her cruel minions watch the gloomy host,
And mark the spot where slaughter rages most;

---

[1] Anthony of Clermont-Renel, as he was shaving himself in his shirt, was massacred by the son of the Baron des Adrets, and by his own cousin, Bussy d'Amboise. The Marquis of Pardaillan was slain at his side.

[2] Guerchy defended himself a long time in the street, and slew many of the assassins till he was overpowered by numbers; but the Marquis of Lavardin had not time to draw his sword.

[3] Marsillac was a favorite of Charles IX., and had spent part of the night with him. The king had some inclination to save him, and had himself commanded him to sleep in the Louvre; but at length he let him depart, saying: "I see plainly it is God's will that he should perish."

[4] Soubise was so called because he had married the heiress of that family. His own name was Dupont-Quellence. He defended himself a long time, and fell covered with wounds under the queen's window. The ladies flocked thither to see his body, naked and bloody as it was, with a savage curiosity, worthy of that abominable court.

Brave chiefs! triumphant only in their shame,
They saw their country blaze, and gloried in the flame.
Oh, scandal to the name of king revered![1]
Himself, the monarch, joins the felon herd;
Himself the trembling fugitives pursues,
And even his sacred hands in blood imbrues.
This Valois, too, whose cause I now support,
Who comes by me, a suppliant to your court,
Shared in his brother's guilt an impious part,
And roused the flames of vengeance in his heart;
Nor yet is Valois fierce, of savage mood,
Or prone by nature to delight in blood;
But on his youth those dire examples wrought,
And weakness, more than malice, was his fault.
A few there were whom vengeance sought in vain,
Who escaped unhurt among the thousands slain.
Caumont![2] thy fortune, thy auspicious fate,
Ages unborn with wonder shall relate.
The hoary sire between his sons reposed,
His aged eyes in needful slumber closed,
One bed sufficed them all; when rushing in
The fell destroyers marred the peaceful scene,
With hasty strokes their poniards plunging round,
They deal a random death at every wound.
But He, whose mercies o'er our fate preside,
Can waft with ease the threatening hour aside;

[1] I have heard the last Marshal of Fessé assert, that in his youth he knew an old man ninety years of age, who had been page to Charles IX., and who had often told him, that he himself loaded the carbine with which the king fired upon his Protestant subjects, the night of St. Bartholomew.

[2] De Caumont, who escaped the massacre, was the famous Marshal de la Force, who afterward gained such great reputation, and lived to the age of fourscore and four years.

Through very zeal to slay, they spare the son,
And not a trace of mischief reached Caumont.
A hand unseen was stretched in his defence,
And screened from harm his infant innocence;
Pierced with a thousand murders, to their force
His father still opposed his bleeding corse,
And a whole nation's ardor to destroy
Eluding, twice gave being to his boy.
Me to sweet sleep resigned, and balmy rest,
No fear alarmed, no jealousy possessed;
Deep in the Louvre at that dreadful hour,
Far from the din of arms I slept secure:
But oh! what scenes my waking eyes surveyed,
Grim death in all its horrid pomp arrayed,
Porches and porticoes were deluged o'er,
With crimson streams, and stood in pools of gore;
My friends still bleeding, my domestics slain,
The truest, best, and dearest of my train.
Already at my bed the villains stand
Prepared, already lift the murdering hand;
My life hangs wavering on a point, I wait
The final stroke, and yield me to my fate.
But whether reverence of their ancient lords,
The blood of Bourbon, checked their daring swords;
Whether ingenious to torment, the queen
Held Henry's life a sacrifice too mean;
Or wisely spared it, to secure alone
In future storms, a shelter for her own;
Instead of death, at once to set me free,
Chains and a dungeon were her stern decree.
Far happier was the fate Coligny shared,
His life alone her treacherous arts ensnared,
The hero's freedom still, and glory unimpaired.

I see Eliza shares in the distress,
Though half the sad recital I suppress.
It seemed as from the queen's malignant eye
All France had caught the signal to destroy;
Swift from the capital on every side
Death o'er the kingdom stretched his banners wide.
Kings in their vengeance are too well obeyed;
Whole armies blindly lend their impious aid;
France floats in blood, and all her rivers sweep
Upon their purple tides, the carnage to the deep.

CANTO III.

The Argument.

The hero continues the history of the civil wars of France. The unfortunate death of Charles IX. Reign of Henry III. His character. That of the famous Duke of Guise, known by the name of Balafré. Battle of Coutras. Murder of the Duke of Guise. Extremities to which Henry III. is reduced. Mayenne at the head of the League. D'Aumale the hero of it. Reconciliation of Henry III., and Henry, King of Navarre. Queen Elizabeth's answer to Henry de Bourbon.

When many a day (for thus the fates ordained)
With blackest deeds of murder had been stained;
When each assassin cruel, and abhorred,
Fatigued with crimes, had sheathed his glutted sword;
Those crimes at length the factious crowd alarmed
Whom zeal had blinded and their sovereign armed.
As rage subsided, melting pity moved
Each friend to virtue who his country loved;
Her plaintive voice awakened softer cares,
And Charles himself relented at her tears.
That early culture, by ill fate designed
To blast the fairer blossoms of his mind,
Conscience subdued—her whispering voice alone
Can shake with terror the securest throne.
Not all his mother's principles could frame
A heart like hers, insensible of shame.
Severe remorse his anxious soul dismayed,

His strength was wasted, and his youth decayed.
Heaven marked him out in vengeance for his crimes,
A dread example to succeeding times.
Myself was present at his latest breath,
And still I shudder at that scene of death,
When, in return for tides of Gallic blood,
Each bursting vein poured forth the crimson flood.[1]
Thus fell lamented in his early prime
A youthful monarch bred to every crime,
From whose repentance we had hoped to gain
The balmy blessings of a milder reign.
Soon as he died, with speed advancing forth
From the bleak bosom of the wintry North
Great Valois came, like some bright Orient star,
To claim his birthright in these realms of war.
On him Polonia had bestowed her throne,[2]
Deemed by each province worthy of the crown.
Great are the dangers of too bright a name,
E'en Valois sank beneath the weight of fame:
Though in his cause each danger I defy,
Could toil forever, and with transport die,
Yet, heaven-born truth, this tongue thy accents loves,
And praises only what the heart approves.
Soon was the race of all his greatness run;
As morning vapors fly before the sun.
Oft have I marked these changes, often seen,

[1] He never enjoyed his health after the affair of St. Bartholomew, and died about two years afterward, May 30, 1574, covered with his own blood, which gushed out from every pore.

[2] The reputation he had acquired at Jarnac and Montcontour, supported by French coin, had gained him the election as King of Poland in 1573. He succeeded Sigismund II., the last prince of the race of the Jagellons.

Heroes and kings become the weakest men:
Have seen the laurelled prince in battle brave
Wear the soft chain, and live a courtier's slave.
This fact by long experience have I known,
Seeds of true courage in the mind are sown.
Valois was formed by heaven's peculiar care
For martial prowess, and the deeds of war:
Yet was too weak the rod of power to wield,
Though great in arms and steady in the field.
Detested minions showed their artful skill,
And reigned supreme the sovereigns of his will.
His voice but dictated their own decrees;
Whilst they, indulging in voluptuous ease,
Drank of each joy which luxury supplies,
And scorned to listen to a nation's cries.
Unmoved beheld afflicted France lament
Her strength exhausted, and her treasures spent.
Beneath their yoke whilst Valois tamely bowed,
And new oppressions from new taxes flowed,
Lo Guise[1] appears! ambition spurs him on,
All eyes are fixed upon this rising sun.
His deeds of war, the glory of his race,
His manly beauty, and attractive grace;
But more than all, that happy, pleasing art,
Which wins our love, and steals upon the heart,
Subdued e'en those whom virtue faintly warms,
And gained their wishes by resistless charms.
None e'er like him could lead the mind astray,
Or rule the passions with more sovereign sway.

---

[1] Henry de Guise; surnamed Balafré: born in 1550, of Francis de Guise and Anne d'Este. He executed the grand project of the League formed by his uncle, the Cardinal of Lorraine, and begun by Francis, his father.

None e'er concealed from busy, curious eyes,
Their dark intentions in so fair disguise.
Though proud ambition kindled in his soul,
His cooler judgment could that pride control.
To gain the crowd, and win deserved esteem,
Detested levies were his daily theme.
Oft have they heard his flattering tongue declare
The public sorrows were his only care.
On modest worth he lavished all his store,
Or clothed the naked, or enriched the poor.
Oft would his alms prevent the starting tear,
And tell that Guise and charity were near.
All arts were tried which cunning might afford,
To court the nobles whom his soul abhorred.
Alike to virtue, as to vice inclined.
Or love, or endless hatred ruled his mind.
He braved all dangers which on arms await,
No chief more bold, none more oppressed the State.
When time at length had made his influence strong,
And fixed the passions of the giddy throng;
Stripped of disguise unmasked the traitor shone,
Defied his sovereign, and attacked the throne.
Within our walls the fatal League began,
And next through France the dire contagion ran.
Nursed by all ranks the hideous monster stood,
Pregnant with woes, and rioting in blood.
Two monarchs ruled o'er Gallia's hapless land:
This shared alone the shadow of command;
That wide diffused fierce war's destructive flame,
Master of all things save the royal name.
Valois awaked the threatening danger sees,
And quits the slumbers of lethargic ease.
But still to ease, and indolence a prey,

His eyes are dazzled by the blaze of day.
Though o'er his head the stormy thunders roll,
Nor storms, nor thunders rouse his sluggish soul.
Sweet to his taste the streams of pleasure flow,
And sleep conceals the precipice below.
Myself remained, the next succeeding heir,
To save the monarch, or his ruin share:
Eager I flew his weakness to supply;
Firmly resolved to conquer, or to die.
But Guise, alas! that sly, dissembling fiend,
By craft deprived him of his truest friend.
That old pretence through all revolving time,
Divine religion, veiled the horrid crime.
The busy crowd fictitious virtue warmed,
With zeal inspired them, and with fury armed.
Before their eyes in lively tints he drew
That ancient worship which their fathers knew.
From new-born sects declared what ills had flowed,
And painted Bourbon as a foe to God.
"Through all your climes, forbid it heaven!" he said,
"His tenets flourish, and his errors spread.
Yon walls, that cast a sacred horror round,
Will soon be sunk, and levelled with the ground.
Soon will you see unhallowed temples rise,
And point their airy summits to the skies.
So loved by Bourbon, so adored has been
The cursed example of Britannia's queen."
Scarce had he spoke when lo! the public fear
Was swiftly wafted to the royal ear.
Nay, more, the Leaguers issue Rome's decree,
And curse the monarch that unites with me.
Now was this arm prepared to strike the blow,
Pour forth its strength, and thunder on the foe;

When Valois, won by subtle, dark intrigue,
Fixed on my ruin, and obeyed the League.
Unnumbered soldiers armed in dread array
Filled every plain, and spoke the king's dismay.
With grief I saw such jealousy disclosed,
Bewailed his weakness, and his power opposed.
A thousand states were lavish of supplies,
Each passing hour beheld new armies rise,
Led on by fierce Joyeuse and well instructed Guise.
Guise, formed alike for prudence as for war,
Dispersed my friends, and baffled all their care.
Still undismayed, such strength my valor boasts,
I pressed through myriads of embattled hosts.
Through all the field I fought the proud Joyeuse—
But stay—the rest Eliza will excuse.
More of that chief 'twere needless to relate,
You've heard his end, and fame has spread his fate.
"Not so," the queen with eagerness replied,
"Well hast thou spoke with modesty thy guide;
But deign to tell me what I wish to hear,
Such themes are worthy of Eliza's ear:
Joyeuse his fall in vivid colors draw;
Go on, and paint thy conquest at Coutras."
Touched with these words the hero hung his head;
An honest blush his manly cheek o'erspread.
Pausing a while, the tale he thus led on,
Yet wished the glory any but his own.
Of all, who Valois could by flattery move,
Who nursed his weakness, and enjoyed his love
Joyeuse illustrious best deserved to share
The fairest sunshine of his royal care.
If to his years the stern decree of fate
Had fixed some period of a longer date,

In noble exploits had his virtue shone,
And Guise's greatness not excelled his own.
But vice o'er virtue gained superior force,
Court was his cradle, luxury his nurse:
Yet dared the amorous chieftain to oppose
Unskilful valor to experienced foes.
From pleasure's downy lap the courtiers came
To guard his person, and to share his fame.
In gay attire each gallant youth was dressed;
Some cipher glittered on each martial vest,
Some dear distinction, such as lovers wear,
To tell the fondness of the yielding fair.
The costly sapphire, or the diamond's rays,
O'er their rich armor shed the vivid blaze.
Thus decked by folly, thus elate and vain,
These troops of Venus issued to the plain.
Swift marched their ranks, as tumult led the way,
Unwisely brave, and impotently gay.
In Bourbon's camp, disdaining empty show,
Far other scenes were opened to the view:
An army, silent as the dead of night,
Displayed its forces well inured to fight;
Men gray in arms, and disciplined to blood,
Who bravely suffered for their country's good.
The only graces, that employed their care,
Were swords well pointed, and the dress of war.
Like them arrayed, and steady to my trust,
I led the squadrons covered o'er with dust.
Like them ten thousand deaths I dared to face,
Distinguished only by my rank and place.
These eyes beheld the brilliant foe o'erthrown,
Expiring legions, and the field our own.
Deep in their breasts I plunged the fatal spear,

And wished some Spanish bosom had been there.
Still shall my tongue their honest praises tell;
Firm at his post each youthful courtier fell,
And bravely struggled to his latest breath
Amidst the terrors of surrounding death.
Our silken sons of pleasure and of ease
Preserve their valor in the midst of peace.
Called forth to war, they bravely scorn to yield,
Servile at court, but heroes in the field.
Joyeuse, alas! I tried, in vain, to save;
None heard the orders which my mercy gave.
Too soon I saw him sunk to endless night,
Sustained by kind associates in the fight,
A pale and breathless corpse, all ghastly to the sight.
Thus some fair stem, whose opening flowers display
Their fragrant bosoms to the dawn of day,
Which decks the early scene, and fresh appears
With zephyrs' kisses, and Aurora's tears,
Too soon decays, on nature's lap reclined,
Cropped by the scythe, or scattered by the wind.
But why should memory recall to view
Those horrid triumphs to oblivion due?
Conquests so gained forever cease to charm,
Whilst Gallic blood still blushes on my arm.
Those beams of grandeur with false lustre shone,
And tears bedew the laurels which I won.
Unhappy Valois! that ill-fated day
Showered down on thee dishonor and dismay.
Paris grew proud, the League's submission less,
And Guise's glory doubled thy distress.
Vimori's plains saw Guise the sword unsheath,
Germania suffered for Joyeuse's death.
Auneau beheld my army of allies

Yield to his power, defeated by surprise.
Through Paris' streets he marched with haughty air,
Arrayed in laurels, and the pride of war.
E'en Valois tamely to his insults bowed,
And served this idol of the gazing crowd.
Shame will at length the coolest courage warm,
And give new vigor to the weakest arm.
Such vile affronts made Valois less incline
To offer incense at so mean a shrine.
Too late he tried his greatness to restore,
And reign the monarch he had lived before.
Now deemed a tyrant by the factious crew,
Nor loyal fear nor love his subjects knew.
All Paris arms, sedition spreads the flame,
And headstrong mutiny asserts her claim.
Encircling troops raise high the hostile mound,
Besiege his palace, and his guards surround.
Guise undisturbed, amidst the raging storm,
Gave it a milder, or severer form:
Ruled the mad tumult of rebellious spleen,
And guided, as he pleased, the great machine.
All had been lost; and Valois doomed to die
By one command, one glance of Guise's eye;
But when each arm was ready for the blow,
Compassion soothed the fierceness of the foe;
Enough were deemed the terrors of the fight,
And meek-eyed pity gave the power of flight.
Guise greatly erred, such subjects all things dare,
Their king must perish, or themselves despair.
This day confirmed, and strengthened in his schemes,
He saw that all was fatal but extremes:
Himself must mount the scaffold, or the throne,

The lord of all things, or the lord of none.
Through Gallia's realms adored, from conquest vain,
Aided by Rome, and seconded by Spain;
Pregnant with hope, and absolute in power,
He thought those iron ages to restore,
When erst our kings in mouldering cloisters lived,
In early infancy of crowns deprived.
In hallowed shades they wept the hours away,
Whilst tyrants governed with oppressive sway.
Valois, indignant at so high a crime,
Delayed his vengeance to some better time.
Our states at Blois were summoned to appear,
And fame, no doubt, has told you what they were.
In barren streams from oratory's tongue
Smooth flowed the tide of eloquence along;
Laws were proposed whose power none e'er perceived,
And ills lamented which none e'er relieved.
Guise in the midst, with high imperious pride,
Was vainly seated by his sovereign's side.
Sure of success, he saw around the throne,
Or thought he saw, no subjects but his own.
These sons of infamy, this venal band
Was ready to bestow the dear command,
When Valois's power was destined to appear,
And burst the chains of mercy and of fear.
Each day his rival studied to attain
The mean, the odious triumphs of disdain;
Nor deemed that ever such a prince could show
Those stern resolves which strike the assassin's blow.
Fate o'er his eyes with envious hand had spread
Her thickest veil's impenetrable shade.
The hour arrived when Guise was doomed to bear

That lot of nature which all mortals share.
Disgraced with wounds before the royal eye
The mighty victim was condemned to die.
All pale, and covered by the crimson tide,
This sun descended in his native pride.
The parting soul, by thirst of glory fired,
In life's last moments to the throne aspired.
Thus fell the powerful chief,[1] assemblage rare
Of foulest vices, and perfections fair.
With other conduct than to kings belongs,
Did Valois suffer, and avenge his wrongs.
Soon did the dire report through Paris spread,
That heaven was injured, and that Guise was dead.
The young, the old, with unavailing sighs
Displayed their grief, and joined their plaintive cries.
The softer sex invoked the powers above,
And clasped his statues in the arms of love.
All Paris thought her father and her God
Called loud for vengeance, and inspired to blood.
Amidst the rest, the brave and valiant Mayenne
Sought not their zealous fury to restrain:
But more by interest than resentment moved,
The flame augmented, and their zeal approved.
Mayenne, under Guise inured to war's alarms,
Was nursed in battle, and trained up to arms:
His brother's equal in each dark intrigue,
And now the lord and glory of the League.
Thus highly raised, thus eminently great;
He grieved no longer for his brother's fate:
But better pleased to govern, than obey,

[1] He was assassinated in the king's antechamber at Blois, on Friday, Dec. 23, 1588.

Forgot the loss, and wiped his tears away.
Mayenne, with a soul to generous deeds inclined,
A statesman's cunning, and a hero's mind,
By subtle arts unnumbered followers draws
To yield him homage, and to serve his laws.
Skilful e'en good from evil to produce,
Full well he knows their talents and their use.
Though brighter splendors dazzled all our eyes,
Not greater dangers ever rose from Guise.
To young Aumale, and this more prudent guide,
The Leaguers owe their courage and their pride.
Aumale, the *great invincible* by name,
Is high exalted in the lists of fame.
Through all their ranks he spreads ambition's fires,
Presumptuous valor, and his own desires.
Unshaken in their cause the League protects,
And bravely executes what Mayenne directs.
Meantime, the king, whose power the Germans dread,
To deeds inhuman from his cradle bred;
That tyrant Catholic, that artful foe,
Incensed at Bourbon, and Eliza too:
Ambitious Philip sends his warlike train
To aid our rivals, and the cause of Mayenne.
Rome, best employed in making wars to cease,
Lights Discord's torch, and bids her fires increase.
The same fierce views the Christian father owns,
Points the keen blade, and animates his sons.
From Europe's either end the torrent falls:
Uniting sorrows burst upon our walls.
Weak, and defenceless in this evil hour
Valois relented, and implored my power.
Humane benevolence my soul approves,

The state commiserates, and Valois loves.
Impending dangers banish all my ire,
A brother's safety is my sole desire.
With honest zeal I labor for his good:
'Tis duty calls me, and the ties of blood.
I know the royal dignity my own,
And vindicate the honors of the crown.
Nor treaty made, nor hostage asked I came,
And told him, courage was his guide to fame.
On Paris' ramparts bid him cast his eye,
And there resolve to conquer, or to die.
These friendly words, thus happily applied,
Through all his soul diffused a generous pride.
Manners thus changed, thus resolutely brave,
The sense of shame, and not example gave.
The serious lessons, which misfortune brings,
Are needful often, and of use to kings.
Thus Henry spoke with honesty of heart,
And begged for succors on Eliza's part.
Now from the towers where rebel Discord stood,
Conquest recalls him to her scenes of blood.
The flower of England follows to the plain,
And cleaves the bosom of the azure main.
Essex commands—the proud Iberian knows
That Essex conquers e'en the wisest foes;
Full little deeming that injurious fate
Should blast his laurels with her keenest hate.
To France brave Henry hastens to repair,
Eager to grace the theatre of war.
"Go," said the queen, "thyself, and virtue please;
My troops attend thee o'er the azure seas.
For thee, not Valois, they endure the fight;
Thy cares must guard them, and defend their right.

From thy example will they scorn to swerve;
And rather seem to imitate, than serve.
Who now the sword for valiant Bourbon draws
Will learn to triumph in Britannia's cause.
Oh! may thy power the factious Leaguers quell,
And Mayenne's allies thy gallant conquests feel!
Spain is too weak thy rebel foes to save,
And Roman thunders never awe the brave.
Go, free mankind, and break the iron chains
Where Sixtus governs, or where Philip reigns.
The cruel Philip, artful as his sire
In all that views of interest may require,
Though less renowned in war, less great and brave,
Division spreads in order to enslave;
Forms in his palace each ambitious scheme,
And boundless triumph is his darling theme.
"Lo! Sixtus raised from nothing to the throne,[1]
Designs more haughty blushes not to own.
Montalto's shepherd monarchs would o'ercome,
And dictate laws in Paris, as at Rome:
Safe in the honors which adorn his brow,
To Philip, and to all mankind a foe:
As serves his cause, or insolent, or meek,
Rival of kings, and tyrant o'er the weak.
Through every clime, with faction at their head,
E'en to our court his dark intrigues have spread.
These mighty rulers fear not to defy;
They both have dared Eliza's power to try:
Witness, ye seas! how Philip fought in vain
'Gainst English valor, and the stormy main.
These shores beheld the proud Armada lost;

[1] Pope Sixtus V., who from having been a shepherd's boy rose to the Papal throne.

Yon purple billows bore the floating host.
Rome's pontiff still in quiet silence bears
The loss of conquest, and our greatness fears.
"Display thy banners in the martial field;
When Mayenne is conquered, Rome herself will yield.
Though proud when fortune smiles, her own defeat
Lays her submissive at the victor's feet.
Prompt to condemn, and eager to absolve,
Her flames and thunders wait on thy resolve."

CANTO IV.

The Argument.

D'Aumale is on the point of being master of the camp of Henry III., when the hero, returning from England, engages the Leaguers and changes the fortune of the day.

Discord comforts Mayenne, and flies to Rome for aid. Description of Rome. Discord meets with Policy. She returns with her to Paris, causes an insurrection of the Sorbonne; animates the Sixteen against the parliament, and arms the monks. Troubles and confusion in Paris.

While thus sequestered from the train of State,
Their glorious interests sagely they debate,
At leisure o'er the princely science stray,
Combat and conquest and imperial sway,
The Seine with terror saw the chiefs combined
Spread on his banks their banners to the wind.
Anxious the king, from Henry distant far,
Bewailed the uncertain destiny of war;
His cheering aid irresolute he needs,
For victory follows still where Bourbon leads.
With triumph the confederate bands beheld
His weak dismay, and eager sought the field;
Chilled every dreadful hour with fresh alarms,
He saw the o'erwhelming torrent of their arms,
And prone to change, and hasty to repent,
Regrets his absence whom himself had sent.
'Long with these traitors to their lawful lord,

Joyeuse's brother[1] drew the factious sword;
By turns a soldier and a saint was he,
Now all for arms, and now a devotee,
Preferred, as when inclined his wavering soul,
One hour the helmet, and the next the cowl.
He left the scenes of penitence and tears,
To bark sedition in the Leaguers' ears,
And bathed remorseless in his country's blood,
The hand just then devoted to his God.

Of all the chiefs for valor most renowned,
Whose prowess shed despair and horror round,
Whose puissant arms the boldest might appall,
The first in feats of glory was d'Aumale.[2]
Sprung from the far-famed heroes of Lorraine,
King, laws, and peace alike were his disdain;
The noblest youths his daring steps pursue,
With them incessant to the field he flew,
Now in still march, now shouting from afar,

[1] Henry, Count of Bouchage, younger brother of the Duke of Joyeuse, slain at Coutras. Once as he was passing by the convent of the Capuchins at Paris, at four o'clock in the morning, after having spent the night in a debauch, he fancied he heard the angels singing matins in the convent. Struck with this idea, he made himself a Capuchin, by the name of "Brother Angel." Afterward, when he quitted the cowl, and took up arms against Henry IV., the Duke of Mayenne made him governor of Languedoc, duke and peer and marshal of France. At length he came to an accommodation with the king: but as he was one day standing with his majesty in a balcony, under which a great multitude were assembled, the king said to him; "Cousin, these people seem delighted with seeing an apostate and a renegade together." This speech of Henry's sent him again to his convent, where he died.

[2] The Chevalier d'Aumale, brother of the Duke d'Aumale, of the house of Lorraine, a young man of impetuous spirit, with many shining qualities; he headed all the sallies during the siege of Paris, and inspired the inhabitants with his own courage and confidence.

By day, by night, he urged the varying war,
Assailed the unguarded foe on every side,
And with their blood the dusty champaign dyed.
So from proud Athos or Imaus' height,
Where earth, sea, air lie stretched before the sight,
With headlong speed the rapid eagle flies,
And vultures dart along the gloomy skies;
With hungry beaks the feathered spoil they rend,
Resistless on the bleating flocks descend,
And soaring to their airy cliffs convey
With screams of cruel joy, the living prey.
Fired on a time and frantic with the thirst
Of glory, to the royal tent he pierced;
Dark was the night and sudden the surprise,
Around the camp a panic horror flies;
The torrent of his arms o'erlooks the mound,
And the big deluge threatens all around.
But when the day-star raised his glimmering urn,
Came Mornay to announce his lord's return;
With joyful speed the impatient chief drew near,
When the rough din smote loudly on his ear,
Amazed he flies, sees terror and distress
In the king's troops, nor even in Bourbon's less,
"And are you vanquished, and is this," he cried,
"Is this the glorious welcome you provide
For Henry, for your Henry?" At that name
Their hearts were flushed again with valor's glowing flame.
So when the Sabine arms drove trembling home
Even to the capital, the bands of Rome,
His guardian god their mighty founder hailed,
And in the name of Stator Jove prevailed.
"Let him," they cry, "let Henry lead the fight,

And we must conquer in our Henry's sight."
Keen as the flash that cleaves the stormy cloud,
In the mid camp the dazzling hero stood,
Impetuous to the foremost ranks he flies,
Death in his hand, and lightning in his eyes;
The ambitious chiefs crowd fast around his shield,
At once he shifts the fortune of the field,
His stern approach the pale confederates shun,
As stars diminished fade before the sun.
D'Aumale enraged tries every art in vain
To rally their disordered files again;
His voice a while their timorous flight withheld,
But Henry's drove them headlong o'er the field;
His awful front strikes terror through the foe,
Their chief unites them, and their fears o'erthrow:
'Till even d'Aumale reluctant borne along
Obeys the o'erwhelming torrent of the throng.
Incumbered thus with many a winter's snow,
Some rock forsakes the mountain's lofty brow,
And wrapt in sheets of ice, rolls o'er the vale below.
He shows to the besieging powers around
His front so long with matchless glory crowned,
Bursts through the multitude, and loathing life,
Seeks in despair once more the mortal strife;
Restrains a while the victor's rapid course,
'Till weak, and baffled by superior force,
Each moment he expects the fatal meed,
Death, the just wages of his hardy deed.
But Discord, for her darling chief afraid,
Flies swift to save him, for she needs his aid,
Between her champion and the foe, she held
Her massy, broad, impenetrable shield,
Whose sight, or rage, or terror can convey,

Omen of death, and meteor of dismay.
Offspring of Hell! from her infernal cave
Then first she came, to succor and to save,
Then first her hand, dire instrument of death,
Redeemed from instant fate a hero's breath.
Forth from the field, her minion, covered o'er
With wounds unfelt amid his toil, she bore,
His anguish with a lenient hand allayed,
And staunched the blood that in her cause was shed.
But while her labors to his limbs impart
Their wonted health, her venom taints his heart.
Thus tyrants oft, with treacherous pity, stay
The wretched doom, and spare but to betray;
Act by his arm the purpose of their hate
And dark revenge, then yield him to his fate.
Bold to achieve, nor fraught with wisdom less
To catch the auspicious moment of success,
Victorious Henry urged the important blow,
And with new fury pressed the astonished foe.
Close in their walls their dire disgrace they mourn,
And dread the assault, and tremble in their turn.
Even Valois now, to martial deeds inspired
The troops, himself by Henry's actions fired;
Laughs at all pain, despises all alarms,
And owns even toil and danger have their charms.
No secret feuds the jarring chiefs confound,
Their brave attempts were all with glory crowned;
Horror, where'er they march, their way prepares.
The ramparts tremble, and the foe despairs.
Where now shall Mayenne deep sorrowing seek redress,
His troops, a people groaning in distress!
The weeping orphan here her sire demands,

There brethren claim their brother at his hands;
Each mourns the present, dreads the future most,
And disaffection rends the murmuring host.
Some counsel flight, surrender some prefer,
But all renounce unanimous the war;
So light the feeble vulgar, and so near
Their headstrong rashness is allied to fear.
Their ruin he beheld already wrought,
A thousand plans perplex his laboring thought;
When Discord by her snaky locks confessed,
Stood forth revealed and thus the chief addressed:
"August descendant of an awful line,
Whose vengeful cause unites thee firm to mine;
Formed by my counsel, nursed beneath my care,
Know thy protectress, and her voice revere.
Shall wretches base as these thy fears excite,
Who freeze with horror at a loss so slight?
Slaves of my power, and vassals of my will,
Even now our great designs they shall fulfil;
Let but my breath their dastard bosoms fire,
They court the combat, and with joy expire."
She spoke, and rapid as the lightning's flight,
Glanced through the clouds, and vanished from his sight.
Around the French she saw confusion lower,
And hailed the sight, and blessed the welcome hour;
The teeming earth grew barren as she passed,
And the bright blossoms withered at the blast;
Flat in the furrow lies the blighted ear,
Pale and half quenched the sickening stars appear;
Beneath her bursts the thunder's sullen sound,
And death-like horror seized the nations round.
Dark scowling o'er the flowery vales below,

A whirlwind snatched her to the banks of Po.
Toward Rome at length her baleful eye she rolled,
Rome, the world's dread, and Discord's fane of old,
Imperial Rome, by destiny designed,
In peace, in war, the mistress of mankind.
By conquest first she stretched her wide domain,
And all earth's monarchs wore her galling chain;
On arms alone her solid empire grew,
And the world crouched where'er her eagle flew.
More peaceful art her modern rule supports,
Now even her conquerors tremble in her courts;
Deep rooted in their hearts her power she sees,
And needs no thunder but her own decrees.
High on that gorgeous wreck of ancient war,
Where Mars for ages drove his rattling car,
A pontiff now maintains his priestly state,
And fills the throne where once the Cæsars sate.
There wandering heedless of the mighty dead,
Monastic feet on Cato's ashes tread,
On God's own altar there the throne they raise,
And one despotic hand the cross and sceptre sways.
There first His infant Church the Almighty placed,
By turns with zeal rejected, or embraced;
There heaven's high will His first apostle taught,
In native truth and singleness of thought.
Scarce meaner praise his successors acquired,
And they were honored most, who least aspired;
No foppery then their modest brow adorned,
All praise but virtue, and all wealth they scorned,
And flew with rapture from their low abode,
To die triumphant in the cause of God.
Depraved at length they scorned their humble state,

And heaven, for man's offences, made them great;
Ambition then profaned the sacred shrine
And human power was grafted on divine;
The lurking dagger and the poisoning bowl
Were the dark basis of their new control.
Vicegerents of the Lord, His holy place
With brutal lust they blushed not to disgrace,
Till Rome, oppressed beneath their hateful reign,
Sighed for her idol gods and pagan rites again.
A wiser race more modern times beheld,
Who crimes like these or wrought not or concealed:
Then kings appealed to Rome's decisive power,
And chose their umpire, whom they feared before;
Humility once more and meekness shone
Renewed, beneath the proud pontific crown.
But pious fraud and priestcraft in these days
Are Rome's chief virtue, and her worthiest praise.

Now in the pomp of apostolic state
Supreme, and crowned with empire, Sixtus[1] sate;
If fraud and churlish insolence might claim
Renown, no monarch bore a fairer name.
Long time he skulked beneath the driveller's part
Disguised, and owed his greatness to his art;
Long seemed unworthy what he sighed to gain,
And shunned it long the surer to obtain.

Deep in his palace, secret and unseen,
Dwelt dark-veiled Policy, mysterious queen;
Unsocial interest and ambition joined
Of yore, to spawn this pelt of humankind.

[1] Sixtus V., when he was cardinal of Montalto, counterfeited the idiot so artfully for fifteen years that he was commonly called the Ass of Ancona. It is well known by what contrivances he obtained the papacy, and with what haughtiness he governed.

Her smiles a free, untroubled soul expressed,
Though cares unnumbered swarmed within her breast;
Keen were her haggard eyes, nor knew to close
Their wakeful lids, nor would admit repose;
Thick woven films o'er Europe's sight she spreads,
Confounds her counsels, and her kings misleads;
Calls truth itself to testify a fraud,
And stamps imposture with the seal of God.
When first the phantom Discord met her view,
With instant rapture to her arms she flew;
Then smiled a ghastly grin, but sighing soon,
As one o'erwhelmed with sorrow, thus begun:
"I see, alas! those happy times no more,
When thoughtless multitudes adored my power,
When Europe credulous obeyed my laws,
And mixed with mine religion's sacred cause.
I spoke, and kings from their exalted seat
Came trembling down, and worshipped at my feet;
High on the echoing Vatican I stood,
And breathed my wars, and launched my storms abroad.
Even life and death confessed my proud domain,
And monarchs reigned by me, or ceased to reign.
Now France subdues my lightnings e'er they fly,[1]

[1] During the wars in the thirteenth century, between the emperors and the popes, Gregory IX. had the hardiness not only to excommunicate the Emperor Frederick II., but even to offer the imperial crown to Robert, the brother of St. Louis. The Parliament of France assembled, answered in the name of the king, that the pope could not lawfully depose a sovereign, nor the brother of a king of France receive from the hand of the pope, a crown over which neither he nor St. Peter had any right. In 1570 the sitting parliament issued a famous arret against the bull *"in cœna*

And quenched and smothered, in my grasp they die.
Religion's friend, she thwarts my slighted arms,
And breaks my philtres, and dispels my charms;
Truth's borrowed guise in vain did I display,
She first discerned, and tore the mask away.
But oh! what joy could I delude her now,
At last avenge my sufferings on my foe.
Come then! my lightnings with thy torch restore,
And France shall feel us, and the world once more;
Our bonds again, earth's haughty lords shall wear,
Again"—she spoke, and pierced by yielding air.

Remote from Rome, where vanity and pride
In temples sacred to themselves reside,
Concealed from sight, within her humble cell,
Religion, pensive maid, delights to dwell.
There angels hover round her calm abode,
And waft her raptures to the throne of God.
Meanwhile, the sanction of her injured name
The oppressor's wrong and tyrant's fury claim;
Yet doomed to suffer, no revenge she knows,
But melts in silent blessings on her foes.
Her artless charms their modest lustre shroud
Forever from the vain tumultuous crowd,
Who without faith their impious vows prefer,
And pray to fortune, while they kneel to her.
In Henry she beheld her future son,
And knew the fates had marked him for her own,

---

domini." The celebrated remonstrances made by the parliament under Louis XI., on the subject of the pragmatic sanction, are well known, as are those likewise which they made to Henry III. against the scandalous bull of Sixtus the Fifth, which called the reigning family a generation of bastards, etc., and the continual fortitude with which they always maintained our liberties against the pretensions of the court of Rome.

With sighs to speed the destined hour she strove,
And viewed and watched him with a seraph's love.
Sudden the fiends[1] their awful foe surprise;
The captive lifts to heaven her streaming eyes;
In vain—for heaven to prove her virtue sure
And steadfast faith, resigns her to their power.
Soon in her snowy veil and holy weeds
The monsters muffle their detested heads,
Then fired with hope, and glorying in their might,
Stretch swift to Paris their impetuous flight.
Deep in the Sorbonne, in august debate,
The sage expounders of heaven's dictates sate.
Their faith unshaken, loyalty unfeigned,
The judges and the examples of the land;
Swayed by no error, by no fear controlled,
Each bore an upright heart, was masculine and bold.
Alas! what human virtue never errs—
Behold the tempter! Policy appears;
Smooth was the melting flattery of her tongue,
And on her artful lips persuasion hung.
The dazzling mitre and the sweeping train,
With ease allure the ambitious and the vain;
With secret bribes the miser's voice she buys,
With decent praise, the learned and the wise;
From each his virtue by some art she stole,
And shook with sounding threats the coward's soul.
Their counsels now with riot they disgrace,
Truth heard the din alarmed, and fled the place.
When thus a sage the general voice expressed,
"Kings are the creatures of the Church confessed;
Chastised or pardoned as her laws decree,

[1] Policy and Discord.

That Church, and guardians of those laws, are we;
Annulled and cancelled are the vows we swore;
Such is our will,[1] and Valois reigns no more."
Scarce was the cursed decree pronounced aloud,
When ruthless Discord copied it in blood,
And signed and sworn the fatal record stood.
Then swift from church to church, with eager speed
The fiend divulges their adventurous deed;
Where'er she came her saintly garb bespoke
Esteem, and sage and holy was her look.
Forth from their gloomy cells, she calls amain
The meagre slaves of voluntary pain;
"Behold in me religion's self," she cries,
"Assert my rights, and let your zeal arise,
'Tis I approach you, 'tis my voice you hear,
For proof, mark well the flaming sword I bear,
Of tempered lightning is that edge divine,
And God's own hand intrusted it to mine.
Emerge, my children! from this silent gloom,
The time for action now and high exploit is come.
Go forth, and teach the lukewarm wavering crowd,
To slay their king if they would serve their God.
Think how the ministry by special grace
Was given of old to Levi's holy race;

[1] On Jan. 17, 1589, the faculty of Theology in Paris awarded that famous decree, by which it was declared that the subject was released from his oath of allegiance, and might lawfully make war upon the king. Lefèvre, the dean, and some of the wisest refused to sign it. Afterward, when the Sorbonne were set at liberty, they revoked this decree, which the tyranny of the League had extorted from some of their society. All the religious orders, who like the Sorbonne, had declared themselves against the royal family, like them retracted. But would they have retracted had the house of Lorraine succeeded?

Jehovah's self pronounced that glory due
To their deserts, when Israel's sons they slew.
Where are, alas! those times of triumph fled,
When by the brothers' arm the victim bled?
Ye priests devout, your spirit was their guide,
'Twas by your hands alone Coligny died;
'Twas then the slaughter raged, go forth, explain
My voice abroad, and let it rage again."

She spoke, and waved the signal; every heart
Throbbed with the poison of the beldam's art.
To Paris next their solemn march she led,
High o'er the midst the bannered cross was spread,[1]
And hymns and holy songs they chanted loud,
As heaven itself their impious cause avowed.
Even on their knees their frenzy they declare,
And mix a pious curse in every prayer:
Bold in the pulpit, timorous in the field,
With uncouth arm the ponderous sword they wield,
Their penitential shirts the zealots hide
Beneath their cankered armor's clumsy pride;
And thus the inglorious band in foul array
Through tides of gazing rabble sped their way,
While high in effigy portrayed they bore
Their God, the God of peace, their crazy troop before.

Mayenne with the pomp of public praise adorned
Their wild attempt, which in his heart he scorned.

[1] When Henry III. and the King of Navarre appeared in arms before Paris, most of the monks put on armor and mounted guard with the citizens. This passage in the poem nevertheless alludes to the procession of the League, in which twelve hundred armed monks were reviewed in Paris, having William Rose, bishop of Senlis, at their head. The fact is mentioned here, though it did not happen till after the death of Henry III.

For well he knew fanatic rage would pass
For sound religion with the common class,
Nor wanted he the princely craft, to court
And soothe the follies of the meaner sort.
The soldier laughed, the sage with frowns surveyed
Their antic pageantry and mad parade,
The many rend the skies with loud applause,
And hail the reverend bulwarks of their cause.
Their daring rashness first to fear gave way,
And frenzy now succeeds to their dismay.
The spirit thus that rules the obedient main,
Can lull the waves to rest, or wake the storm again.
Now Discord from the tribe of Valois's foes,
Twice eight,[1] the rankest of the faction chose,
Slaves of the queen, who yet presumed to guide
The car of state, like monarchs, at her side,
While pride and perfidy, revenge and death,
With streams of slaughter marked the road beneath.
Mayenne blushed to see the paltry minions stand
So near himself, his equals in command,
But fellowship in guilt all rank destroys,[2]
As great the wretch who serves, as who employs.
So when the winds, fierce tyrants of the deep,
The Seine or Rhone with rapid fury sweep,
Black rises from below the stagnant mud,
And stains the silver surface of the flood.

[1] It is not meant that there were but sixteen individuals listed in the faction, as the Abbé Legendre has remarked in his little history of France; but they were called "the Sixteen," from the sixteen quarters of Paris which they governed by their spies and their emissaries.

[2] The Sixteen were long independent of the Duke of Mayenne. One of them, named Normand, said once in the duke's chamber, that they who had made the duke could easily unmake him.

So when the flames some destined town invade,
And on the plain the smoking towers are spread,
The mingling metals in one mass are rolled,
And worthless dross incrusts the purest gold.
Themis alone uninfluenced by their crimes,
Escapes the foul contagion of the times;
With her, nor hope of power nor fear prevail,
But still well-poised she trimmed the steady scale,
No spots the lustre of her shrine impair,
But justice finds a sacred refuge there.
There, foes to vice, and equity their guide,
An awful senate o'er the laws preside,
With patriot candor watchful to secure
The people's privilege and monarch's power;
True to the crown, yet anxious for the State,
Tyrants alike and rebels are their hate;
Firm their allegiance still, though free and brave,
They scorn to sink the subject to the slave,
Rome and the Roman power full well they know,
Know to respect it, and to curb it, too.
Chosen from the League, furious troops beset
The portal, and invade the still retreat;
Bussy,[1] than whom no chief might better claim
That bad pre-eminence, their leader came,
And thus the ruffian, proud of the command
He bore, bespoke the venerable band:

[1] On January 16, 1589, Bussy Leclerc, one of the Sixteen, who from a fencing master had become governor of the Bastille, and chief of the faction, entered the grand chamber of the parliament, followed by fifty guards. He presented to them a request, or rather an order to compel them to renounce the royal family. On their refusal he himself imprisoned in the Bastille all those who opposed his party. There he made them fast upon bread and water, that they might be the readier to ransom themselves, for which reason he was called the Grand Penitentiary of the Parliament.

"Ye, who for pay the law's vile drudgery bear,
And doze, and dream, plebeians as you are,
Of kings committed to your guardian care,
Yet still when public feuds and broils prevail,
Set the mean trappings of your rank to sale,
Timorous in war, in peace a blustering train,
Hear what your lords, the commonwealth, ordain.
Societies were formed ere kings were made,
We claim the rights our ancestors betrayed,
The people whom your arts enslaved before,
Discern the cheat, and will be slaves no more.
Truce with the pomp of titles then, away
With every sound of arbitrary sway,
Draw from the people's rights your power alone,
Friends of the State, nor bondsmen of the throne."
He spoke, and scorn appeared in every eye,
Nor censure else vouchsafed they, or reply.
So when of old within her ruined wall
Rome in dismay received the conquering Gaul,
Undaunted still her awful senate sate,
Calm as in peace, nor trembled at their fate.
"Tyrants," he cried with fury, "though not free
From secret dread, obey or follow me."
Then famed for worth and fearless of his foes,
Their honored chief, illustrious Harlay rose,
And claimed his fetters with so stern a tone,
As for their hands he sought them, not his own.
At once his hoary brethren of the laws,
Ambitious victims in the royal cause,
And proud to share their Harlay's glorious pains,
With outstretched arms received the traitor's chains.
The gathering multitude around them roars,
And crowds attend them to those dreary towers,

Where vengeance, undistinguishing in blood,
Too oft confounds the guilty and the good.
Thus sinks the State beneath their lawless power,
The Sorbonne's fallen, the senate is no more.
But why this throng? that universal yell?
The fatal scaffold, and the torturing wheel?
Say for whose punishment this pomp's designed?
For theirs—the first, the noblest of mankind.[1]
So fare the just in Paris, such reward
For patriots here, and heroes is prepared.
Yet hapless sufferers, no disgrace invades
Your honest fame, nor blush your injured shades,
Your fate was glorious, and whoe'er like you
Dies for his king, shall die with glory, too.
O'erjoyed meanwhile, and revelling in blood,
Amidst her bands triumphant Discord stood,
Self-satisfied, with well-contented air,
She saw the dire effects of civil war,
Saw thousands leagued against their monarch's life,
Yet even themselves divided and at strife,
Dupes of her power, and servants of her hate,
Push the mad war, and urge their country's fate,
Tumult within, and danger all without,
While havoc smote the realm, and marched it round about.

[1] On Friday, Nov. 15, 1591, Barnaby Brisson, a person of great knowledge, who performed the duty of chief president in the absence of Achilles de Harlay: Claude Larcher, counsellor of the Inquests, and Jean Tardif, counsellor of the Châtelet, were hanged in the little Châtelet by order of the Sixteen.

CANTO V.

The Argument.

The besieged are very sharply pressed. Discord persuades Clément to go to Paris and assassinate the king. He is conducted by Fanaticism, whom Discord calls for that purpose from the infernal regions. Sacrifice of the Leaguers to the spirits of darkness. Henry III. is assassinated. Sentiments of Henry IV. upon the occasion. He is acknowledged king of France by the army.

Now marching on, those dread machines appeared,
Which death attended, and the rebels feared.
A hundred mouths poured forth the rapid balls,
And iron tempests rattled on the walls.
Now was employed, and exercised in vain
The zeal of party, and the wiles of Mayenne.
The guards of Paris, and the noisy crowd,
The prating doctors insolent, and loud,
Tried, but in vain, our hero to subdue,
Beneath whose feet victorious laurels grew.
By Rome and Philip were the thunders hurled,
But Rome diffused no terrors through the world.
His native sloth the old Iberian showed
And all his succors were too late bestowed.
Through Gallia's realms the plundering troops enjoyed
The spoils of cities which their arms destroyed.
An easy conquest o'er oppressed allies

Was first and fairest in the traitor's eyes.
The falling League but waited to receive
Whate'er the pride of tyranny could give,
When fate, that governs with supreme command,
Appeared suspended by a zealot's hand.
Forgive, ye citizens, whose peaceful days
Are calm, and brightened by serener rays,
Forgive the bard who paints the horrid crimes
That stained the annals of preceding times.
Yourselves unsullied may the lays approve,
Whose hearts are warm with loyalty and love.
In every age, some venerable seer
For heaven's pure joys has shed the pious tear;
Some rigid anchorets with vows divine
Have heaped their incense on religion's shrine.
Lost to the world, to each idea lost
That friendship loves, or charity can boast,
Their gloomy shades and cloisters ever rude
The beams of fair humanity exclude.
Others in flowing periods have displayed
Religion's truths by learning's powerful aid.
In these ambition has produced desires
Mean and unworthy virtue's sacred fires.
Oft have their schemes extended far and wide,
And all their piety been sunk in pride.
Thus by perverse, untoward abuses still
The highest good becomes the greatest ill.
Those, who the life of Dominic embraced,
In Spain with wreaths of glory have been graced,
From mean employments have with lustre shone,
Like painted insects glittering round the throne.
In France they flourished in the days of yore,
With equal zeal, but far unequal power.

The kindly patronage, from kings derived,
Might still attend them, had not Clément lived.
The soul of Clément, gloomy and austere,
Was formed to virtues rigid, and severe.
Soon as the torrent of rebellion flowed,
The tide he followed and pronounced it good.
Fell Discord rising had profusely shed
Infernal poisons o'er his youthful head.
The long-drawn aisle and venerable shrine
Witness what prayers fatigued the powers divine.
This was their form, before the throne of grace,
Whilst dust and ashes sanctified his face:
"Almighty Being, whose avenging arm
Protects religion, and her sons from harm,
How long shall justice sleep, or tyrants live,
The perjured flourish, and oppression thrive?
Let us, O God, Thy gracious mercies tell,
Thy fiery scourges let the sinner feel.
Dispel death's horrid gloom, assist the brave,
And crush the tyrant, whom Thy fury gave.
Send Thy destroying angel from above,
Descend in flames, and let Thy thunders move.
Descend and quell the sacrilegious host,
Defeat their triumphs, and confound their boast.
Let ruin seize, great sovereign Lord of all,
Kings, chiefs, and armies in one common fall,
As gathering storms the leaves of autumn bear
O'er hills and valleys through the fields of air.
The League shall praise Thy name with holy tongue,
Whilst blood and murder elevate the song."
Discord, attentive, heard his hideous cries,
And swift to Pluto's dreary regions flies.
From those dark realms the worst of tyrants came,

Fanatic Demon is his horrid name.
Religion's son, but rebel in her cause,
He tears her bosom, and disdains her laws.
'Twas he that guided Ammon's frantic race,
Where silver Arnon winds his liquid maze.
When weeping mothers, with mad zeal possessed,
Slew their fond infants clinging to the breast.
Through him rash Jephthah vowed, the fiend imbrued
The father's dagger in the daughter's blood.
By him the impious Chalchas was inspired,
And tender Iphigenia's death required.
Thy forests, France, the cruel power approved;
There smoked the incense which Tentates loved.
Thy shades have seen the human victims bleed,
While hoary druids authorized the deed.
From Rome's proud capitol he gave the word,
When Christians shuddered at the pagan sword.
When Rome submitted to the Son of God,
High o'er the church he waved his iron rod.
Christians, once doomed to feel the flickering flame,
Were deaf to mercy, and unmoved by shame.
On Thames's banks the seeds of faction grew,
Whose bloody arm the feeble monarch slew.
The same fierce genius fans the annual fire
At Lisbon, or Madrid, when Jews expire,
Unwilling to desert the cause of heaven,
Or quit the faith their ancestors have given.
Like some high priest his part the demon played,
In the pure vest of innocence arrayed.
Now, from the wardrobe of eternal night
For other crimes equipped, he sprang to light.
Deceit, forever plausible and fair,

Dressed him like Guise in person, height, and air,
The haughty Guise, whose artifice alone
Enchained the listless monarch on his throne,
Whose power still working, like some fatal star,
Foreboded ruin, and inspired to war.
The dreaded helmet glittered on his head;
The sword, prepared for every murderous deed,
Flamed in his hand—and many a wound could tell
How once at Blois the factious hero fell.
For vengeance calling loud, the crimson tide
Fast flowed in copious streams adown his side.
Clad in this mournful garb, when night had shed
Her peaceful slumbers over Clement's head,
In that still hour, when horrid spectres meet,
He sought the zealot in his calm retreat.
Cabal, and superstition, nurse of sin,
Unbarred the doors, and let the chieftain in.
"Thy prayers," he cried, "the powers of heaven receive,
But more than tears or prayers should Clement give.
The Leaguer's God will other offerings claim;
More fit, more worthy of His holy name.
Far other incense must adorn His shrine;
Offerings more pure, and worship more divine.
Had Judith only wept with plaintive sighs,
A female's grief, and unavailing cries,
Had life been dearer than her country's call,
Judith had seen Bethulia's levelled wall.
These exploits copy, these oblations bring,
Derive thy currents from that sacred spring.
I see thee blush—go, fly at my command,
Let royal blood now consecrate thy hand.

Set wretched Paris from her tyrant free,
Avenging Rome, the universe, and me.
Go, murder Valois, as he murdered Guise,
Nor deem it faulty in religion's eyes.
Who guards the Church, and vindicates her laws,
Is bravely acting in fair virtue's cause.
When heaven commands, then every deed is good,
Attend her accents, and prepare for blood.
Thrice happy, couldst thou join the tyrant's death
To Bourbon's fall, and gain a nobler wreath!
Oh, could thy citizens!—but fate denies
Thy hand the honors of that happy prize.
Yet, should thy fame with rays inferior shine,
Scorn not the gift, but finish heaven's design."
Thus spoke the phantom, and unsheathed the blade,
By hatred once in Stygian waters laid.
To Clement's hand he gave the fatal steel,
Then swiftly fled, and downward sank to hell.
The young recluse, too easily deceived,
Himself the Almighty's delegate believed:
Embraced the gift with reverential love,
And begged assistance from the powers above.
The fiend no superstitious influence spared,
But all his soul for parricide prepared.
How apt is error to mislead mankind!
And reason's piercing eye how often blind!
The raging Clement, happy, and at ease,
Happy as those whom truth and virtue please;
With downcast looks, and virtue's clouded brow,
To heaven addressed the sacrilegious vow.
On as he marched, his penitential veil
Concealed from view the parricidal steel.

The fairest flowers each conscious friend bestowed,
And balmy odors to perfume the road.
These guides, in counsel or in praises, joined
To add new fervor to his zealous mind.
The holy calendar received his name,
Equal to saints in virtue, and in fame,
Now hailed as patron, now adored as God,
And fed with incense by the kneeling crowd.
Transports less warm, less moving raptures fired
The Christian heroes, and their souls inspired,
When pious brethren were consigned to death,
Firm, and intrepid to their latest breath.
They kissed each footstep, thought each torture gain,
And wished to feel the agonizing pain.
Fanatics thus religion's ensigns bear,
Like worthies triumph, and like saints appear.
The same desire the good and impious draws,
Unnumbered martyrs fall in error's cause.
Mayenne's piercing eyes beheld the future blow,
And more was known, than what he seemed to know.
Intending wisely, when the blood was spilt,
To reap the profits, but avoid the guilt.
Sedition's sons were left to guide the whole,
And steel with rage the impious zealot's soul.
To Paris' gates they lead the traitor on;
While the Sixteen with fond impatience run
To arts infernal, and devoutly pray
That heaven her secret counsels would display.
This science once distinguished Catherine's reign,
Though always criminal, and often vain.
The servile people, that forever love
Each courtly vice, and what the great approve,
Fond of whate'er is marvelous or new,

The same impieties with zeal pursue.
When night's still shades concealed the bands impure,
Silence conducts them to a vault obscure.
By the pale torch, which faintly pierced the gloom,
They raise an altar on the mouldering tomb.
There both the royal images appear,
Alike the objects of their rage and fear.
There to Almighty power their vows are paid,
And hellish demons summoned to their aid.
High on the walls, a hundred lances stood,
Mysterious, awful terrors! plunged in blood.
Their priest was one of that unhappy race
Proscribed on earth, and sentenced to disgrace,
Slaves long inured to superstition's lore,
Whose crimes and sorrows spread from shore to shore.
The Leaguers next the sacrifice begin
With horrid cries, and bacchanalian din:
Now bathe their arms within the crimson tide;
Now on the altar strike at Valois's side.
Now with more rage, the terror to complete,
See Henry's image trod beneath their feet.
Death, as they thought, would aid the impious blow,
And send the heroes to the shades below.
The Hebrew tried by blasphemy to move
The depths beneath, and all the powers above;
Invoked the spirits that in ether dwell,
Swift lightnings, thunders, and the flames of hell.
Endor's famed priestess erst such offerings made,
And raised by dire enchantments Samuel's shade;
Thus in Samaria once 'gainst Judah hung
The lying accent on the prophet's tongue;

And thus inflexibly Ateius rose
The high designs of Crassus to oppose.
The League's mad ruler waited to receive
To charms and spells what answer heaven would give,
Convinced that vows, thus offered, wing their way
To the pure regions of eternal day.
Heaven heard the magic sounds, which only drew
From thence the vengeance to their errors due.
For them were stopped the laws which nature gave,
And plaintive murmurs filled the silent cave.
Successive lightnings in the depth of night
Flashed all around and gleamed with horrid light.
Great Henry shone amidst the lambent flames,
Encircled round with glory's golden beams.
High on the car of triumph as he rode,
Grace on his brow the laurel wreath bestowed,
The royal sceptre glittered in his hand,
Emblem of power, and ensign of command.
Loud rolling thunders gave the fatal sign,
And opening earth received the flaming shrine.
The priest and Leaguers shuddered at the sight,
And veiled their crimes beneath the shades of night.
The rolling thunders and the fiery blaze
Declared that God had numbered Valois's days.
Grim death rejoiced; and, such the Almighty's will,
Crimes were allowed His sentence to fulfil.
Now Clement to the royal tent drew near,
And begged admission undismayed by fear.
For heaven, he said, had sent him to bestow
Reviving honors on the monarch's brow;
And secrets to unfold, which might appear
Worthy reception from his sovereign's ear.

All mark his looks, and many a question ask
Lest his attire some bad design should mask.
He undisturbed, with calm and simple air
Returns them answers plausible and fair.
Each accent seems from innocence to spring.
The guards attend, and lead him to their king.
Calm as before, he bent the suppliant knee;
Unruffled, and unawed by majesty:
Marked where to strike, and thus, by falsehood's aid,
With treacherous lies his feigned addresses paid:
"Pardon, dread sovereign, him who trembling brings
Submissive praises to the king of kings.
Oh, let me thank kind heaven, whose gracious aid
Has showered down blessings on thy sacred head.
Potier the good, and Villerois the sage
Have faithful proved in this rebellious age.
Harlay the great, whose brave, intrepid zeal
Was ever active in the public weal,
Immured in prison, still thy cause defends,
Confounds the League, and animates thy friends.
"That mighty Being, whose all-piercing eyes
Defeat the counsels of the great and wise:
Whose will no human knowledge can withstand,
Whose works are finished by the weakest hand:
To Harlay guided thy devoted slave,
That loyal subject ever good and brave.
His sage advice and sentiments refined
Diffused a radiance o'er my clouded mind.
To bring these lines with eagerness I flew,
By Harlay counselled, and to Valois true."
The king received the letters with surprise,

And tears of holy rapture filled his eyes.
"Oh, when," he cried, "shall Valois's hand supply
Rewards proportioned to thy loyalty?"
Thus spoke the monarch with affection warm,
Love undissembled, and extended arm.
Each motion well the monstrous traitor eyed,
And fiercely plunged the dagger in his side.
Soon as they saw the crimson torrents flow,
A thousand hands revenged the fatal blow.
The zealot wished not for a happier time,
But stood unmoved, and triumphed in his crime.
Through opening skies, he saw the heavenly dome,
And endless glories in the world to come;
Claimed the bright wreath of martyrdom from God,
And falling, blessed the hand that shed his blood.
Oh, dread illusion, terrible and blind,
Worthy the hate and pity of mankind.
Infectious preachers more deserved the blame,
From whom the madness and the poison came.

The hour arrived when Valois's darkened sight
Faintly beheld the parting, glimmering light.
Surrounding slaves with many a falling tear
Expressed their griefs dissembled or sincere.
For some there were, whose sorrows soon expired,
With pleasing hopes of future greatness fired.
Others, whose safety with the king was fled,
Themselves lamented, not the royal dead.
Amidst the various sounds of plaintive cries
Tears unaffected flowed from Henry's eyes.
Thy foe, great Bourbon, fell; but souls like thine
In such dread moments every thought resign,
Save those which friendship and compassion claim:
Self-love destroys not the celestial flame.

The generous chief forgot his own renown,
Though to himself devolved the regal crown.
To raise his eyes the dying monarch strove,
And clasped his hand with tenderness and love.
"Bourbon," he cried, "thy generous tears refrain,
Let others weep whose conduct I disdain.
Fly thou to vengeance, spread the dire alarm,
Go reign, and triumph with victorious arm.
I leave thee struggling on the stormy coast
Where shipwrecked Valois was forever lost.
My throne awaits thee, take it as thy due,
Its sole protection was derived from you.
Eternal thunders threaten Gallia's kings,
Then fear the power from whom the glory springs.
By thee, from impious tenets undeceived,
Be all the honors of His shrine revived.
Farewell, brave prince, and reign by all adored,
Guarded by heaven from each assassin's sword.
You know the League, with us begins the blow,
Nor stays its fury, but would end with you.
In future days perchance some barbarous hand,
Obedient slave to faction's dread command,
Some arm—but oh! ye guardian angels, spare
Virtues so pure, so exquisite, and rare.
Permit"—no more he said; departing breath
Consigned the monarch to the arms of death.
Now was all Paris filled with joyful cries,
And odious songs of triumph rent the skies.
The fanes are opened wide at Valois's death,
And every Leaguer wears the flowery wreath.
All labor ends while faction blithe and gay,
To mirth and feasting consecrates the day.
Bourbon appeared the object of their sport,

And glorious valor seemed his sole support.
Say, could he rise, and e'er resist again
The strengthened League, the angry Church, and Spain,
The Roman thunders with such fury hurled,
And the bright treasures of the western world?
Some warlike few, who little understood
What most contributes to the public good,
Affecting scruples foolish and refined,
Calvin's defence already had resigned.
Redoubled ardor in the royal cause
The rest inflamed, and ruled by other laws.
These generous soldiers, well approved in war,
Who long had rode on triumph's radiant car,
To Bourbon give unsettled Gallia's throne,
And all proclaim him worthy of the crown.
Those valiant knights, the Givris, and Daumonts,
The Montmorencys, Sancis, and Crillons,
Swear to remain inviolable friends,
And guard his person to earth's utmost ends.
True to their laws, and faithful to their God,
They boldly march where honor points the road.
"From you, my friends," cried Bourbon, "is derived
That lot which kindred heroes have received.
No peers have authorized our high command,
No holy oil, or consecrating hand.
All due allegiance, in the days of yore,
Your brave forefathers on their bucklers swore.
To victory's laurelled field your hands confined
From there send forth the monarchs of mankind."
Thus spoke the chief, and, marching first, prepared
By martial deeds to merit his reward.

CANTO VI.

The Argument.

After the death of Henry III., the Leaguers assemble in Paris to elect a king. In the midst of their debates, Henry IV. storms the city. The assembly is dismissed. The members that composed it repair to the ramparts. Description of the ensuing battle.

In France an ancient custom we retain,
When death's rude stroke has closed the monarch's reign,
When destiny cuts short the smooth descent,
And all the royal pedigree is spent,
The people to their former rights restored,
May change the laws or choose their future lord.
The states in council represent the whole,
Elect the king, and limit his control;
Thus our renowned forefathers did ordain
That Capet should succeed to Charlemagne.
The League with vain presumption arrogates
This right, and hastens to convene the states.
They thought the murder of the king bestowed
That power perhaps, on those who shed his blood,
Thought that the semblance of a throne would shroud
Their dark designs, and captivate the crowd,
Would help their jarring counsels to unite,
And give their foul pretence an air of right;
That from what source soe'er his claim may spring,
Just or unjust, a king is still a king,

And worthy or unworthy of the sway,
A Frenchman must have something to obey.
Swift to the Louvre with imperious air
And fierce demeanor the proud chiefs repair;
Thither whom Spain ambassador had sent,
And Rome, with many a priestly bigot went,
To speed the election with tumultuous haste,
An insult on the kings of ages past,
And in the splendor of their trains, expense
Was seen, the child of public indigence.
No princely potentate or high-born peer
Sprung from our old nobility, was there,
Their grandeur now a shadowy form alone,
Though lawgivers by birth and kinsmen of the throne.
No sage assertors of the public claim,
Strenuous and hardy, from the commons came,
No lilies as of old the court arrayed,
But foreign pomp and pageant in their stead.
There sumptuous o'er the throne for Mayenne prepared,
A canopy of royal state was reared,
And on the front with rich embroidery graced,
Oh, dire indignity! these lines were traced.
"Kings of the earth, and judges of mankind,
Who deaf to mercy, by no laws confined,
Lay nature waste beneath your fierce domain,
Let Valois' fate instruct you how to reign."
Forthwith contentious rage with jarring sound,
And clamorous strife discordant echo round.
Slave to the smiles of Rome, obsequious here
A venal flatterer soothes the legate's ear;
"'Tis time," he cries, "the lily should bow down

Her head, obedient to the triple crown,
Time that the Church should lift her chastening hand,
And from her high tribunal scourge the land."[1]
Cruel tribunal! scene of monkish power,
Which even the realms that suffer it, abhor;
Whose fiery priests by bigotry prepared,
Torture and death without remorse award,
Disgraceful to the sacred cause they guard;
As if mankind were, as of old, possessed
With pagan blindness, when the lying priest
To appease the wrath of heaven with vengeance fired,
The sacrifice of human blood required.
Some for Iberian gold betray the State,
And sell it to the Spaniard whom they hate.
But mightier than the rest, their power was shown,
Who destined Mayenne already to the throne.
The splendor of a crown was wanting yet,
To make the fulness of his fame complete;
To that bright goal his daring wish he sends,
Nor heeds the danger that on kings attends.
Then Potier rose; plain, nervous and untaught
His eloquence, the language of his thought.
No blemish of the times had touched the sage,
Revered for virtue in a vicious age;
Oft had he checked, with courage uncontrolled,
The tide of faction headlong as it rolled,
Asserted hardily the laws he loved,
Nor ever feared reproof, or was reproved.
He raised his voice; struck silent at the sound

[1] The Dukes of Guise wanted to establish the Inquisition in France.

The crowd was hushed, and listening gathered round.
So when at sea the winds have ceased to roar,
And the loud sailor's cries are heard no more,
No sound survives, but of the dashing prow
That cleaves with prosperous course the obedient wave below.
Such Potier seemed; no rude disturbance broke
The attentive calm, while freely thus he spoke:
"Mayenne, I perceive then, has the general voice;
And though I praise not, can excuse your choice;
His virtues I esteem not less than you,
And were I free to choose, might choose him, too.
But if the laws ambitious he pervert,
His claim of empire cancels his desert."
Thus far the sage; when lo! that instant Mayenne
Himself appeared, with all a monarch's train.
"Prince!" he pursued, and spoke it boldly forth,
"I dare oppose you, for I know your worth;
Dare step between your merit and the throne,
Warm in the cause of France, and in our own.
Vain your election were, your right unsound,
While yet in France a Bourbon may be found;
Heaven in its wisdom placed you near the throne,
That you might guard but not usurp the crown;
His ashes sprinkled with a monarch's gore
The shade of injured Guise can ask no more;
Point not your vengeance then at Henry's head,
Nor charge him with the blood he never shed.
Heaven's influence on you both too largely flows,
And 'tis your rival virtue makes you foes.
But hark! the clamor of the common herd
Ascends the skies, and heretic's the word;

And see the priesthood ranged in dark array,
To deeds of blood insatiate urge their way!
Barbarians, hold—what custom yet unknown,
What law, or rather frenzy of your own,
Can cancel your allegiance to the throne?
Comes he, this Henry, savage and unjust,
To o'erthrow your shrines, and mix them with the dust?
He, to those shrines in search of truth he flies,
And loves the sacred laws yourselves despise;
Virtue alone, whatever form she wears,
Whatever sect she graces he reveres;
Nor like yourselves, weak, arrogant and blind,
Dares do the work of God, and judge mankind;
More righteous and more Christian far than you,
He comes to rule, but to forgive you, too.
And shall you judge your master, and shall he,
The friend of freedom, not himself be free?
Not such, alas! nor sullied with your crimes,
Were the true Christian race of elder times;
They, though all heathen errors they abhorred,
Served without murmuring their heathen lord,
The doom of death without a groan obeyed,
And blessed the cruel hand by which they bled:
Such are the Christians whom true faith assures,
They died to serve their kings, you murder yours,
And God, whom you describe forever prone
To wrath, if He delights to shower it down
On guilty heads, shall aim it at your own."
He closed his bold harangue, confusion scared
Their conscious souls, none answered him, or dared;
In vain they would have shaken from their hearts,
The dread which truth to guiltiness imparts,

With fear and rage their troubled thoughts were tossed,
When suddenly a shout from all their host
Was heard: "To arms! to arms! or we are lost."
Dark clouds of dust in floating volumes rise
Wide o'er the champaign, and obscure the skies;
The clarion and the drum with horrid sound,
Dread harbingers of slaughter echo round.
So from his gloomy chambers in the North,
When the fierce spirit of the storm breaks forth,
His dusky pinions shroud the noon-day light,
And thunder and sharp winds attend his dreary flight.
'Twas Henry's host came shouting from afar,
Disdaining ease, and eager for the war;
O'er the wide plain they stretched their bright array,
And to the ramparts urged their furious way.
These hours the chief vouchsafed not to consume
In empty rites performed at Valois' tomb,
Unprofitable tribute! fondly paid
By the proud living to the unconscious dead;
No lofty dome, nor monumental pile,
On the waste shore he raised with fruitless toil,
Vain arts! to rescue the departed great,
From the rough tooth of time and rage of fate;
A nobler meed on Valois' shade below,
And worthier gifts he hastened to bestow,
To avenge his murder, make rebellion cease,
And rule the subjugated land in peace.
The din of battle gathering at their gates,
Dissolved their council, and dispersed the states.
Swift from the walls to view the advancing host
The general flew, the soldier to his post,

With shouts the approaching hero they incense,
And all is ripe for onset and defence.
Though pleasure now, and peace securely reign
In all her courts, not such was Paris then,
But girt with massy walls, and unexposed,
An hundred forts the narrower town inclosed;
The suburbs now defenceless and unbarred,
The gentle hand of peace their only guard,
Adorned with all the pomp that wealth supplies,
Proud spires and palaces that pierce the skies,
Were then a cluster of rude huts alone,
A rampart all around of earth was thrown,
With a deep foss to part them from the town.
From the east the mighty chief his march began,
And death with hasty strides came foremost in his van.
Winged with red flames impetuous from on high
And from below, the showery bullets fly,
The rattling storm resistless thickens round,
And tumbles tower and bastion to the ground;
Gored and defaced the gay battalions bleed,
And on the plain their shattered limbs are spread.
In earlier times, unaided and untaught,
His fate by simpler means the soldier wrought;
Strength against strength opposed the contest tried,
And on their swords alone the combatants relied;
More cruel wars their children learned to wage,
Nor less than lightning satisfied their rage.
Then first was heard the thunder-bearing bomb,
Imprisoned mischief struggling in its womb,
Swift on the destined mark the ponderous shell
Came down, and spread destruction where it fell.
Next, dire improvement on the barbarous trade,

In hollow vaults the secret mine was laid;
In vain the warrior trusting in his might,
Speeds his bold march, and seeks the promised fight,
A sudden blast divides the yawning earth,
And the black vapor kindles into birth,
Smote by strange thunder sinks the astonished host,
Deep in the dark abyss forever lost.
These dangers Bourbon unappalled defies,
Impatient for the strife, a throne the prize.
Where'er his hardy bands the hero leads,
'Tis hell beneath, and tempest o'er their heads,
His glorious steps, undaunted they pursue,
Fired by his deeds still brightening in their view.
Grave in the midst the valiant Mornay went,
Though slow his march, intrepid his intent;
Rage he alike disdained and slavish dread,
Nor heard the thunders bursting round his head;
War was heaven's scourge on man, he wisely thought,
Nor loved the task, but took it as his lot;
Even for the wonders of his sword he grieved,
And loathed it for the glories it achieved.
Now poured their legions down the dreadful way,
Where smeared with blood the sloping glacis lay;
More fierce as more in danger, with the slain
They choke the foss, and lift it to the plain,
Then borne upon the supple numbers, reach
The ramparts, and rush headlong to the breach.
Waving his bloody falchion, Henry led
The way, and entered furious at their head.
Already fixed by his victorious hand
High on the walls his glittering banners stand:
Awe-struck the Leaguers seemed, as they implored

The conqueror's mercy, and confessed their lord;
But Mayenne recalls them to their guilty part,
And drives the dawning grace from every heart,
Till crowded in close phalanx, they beset
Their king, whose eye their hardiest feared to meet.
Fierce on the battlements, and bathed in blood
Of thousands slain, the fury Discord stood;
There best her horrid mandates they obey,
And joined in closer fight more surely slay.

Sudden the deep-mouthed engines cease to roar,
And the loud thunder of the war is o'er:
At once a universal silence round,
With awful pause, succeeds the deafening sound;
Now through his foes the soldier cleaves his way,
And on the sword alone depends the day;
Alternate the contending leaders boast
The bloody ramparts won, and yield them lost:
Still victory the doubtful balance swayed,
And joined in air the mingling banners played,
Till oft triumphant, and as oft subdued,
Fled the pale League, and Henry swift pursued.
'Tis thus the restless billows wash the shore,
By turns o'erwhelm it, and by turns restore.

Then most in that tremendous hour was shown,
The might of Bourbon's rival, and his own;
'Twas then each hero's warlike soul was proved,
That in the shock of charging hosts unmoved,
Amidst confusion, horror and despair,
Ranged the dread scene and ruled the doubtful war.

Meanwhile renowned for many a martial deed,
A gallant English band brave Essex led,
In Gallia's cause with wonder they advance,
And scarcely can believe they fight for France.

On the same ramparts where the conquered Seine,
Saw in old time their great forefathers reign,
For England's sake they wage the mortal strife,
Proud to enhance her fame, and prodigal of life.
Impetuous Essex first the breach ascends,
Where fierce d'Aumale the crowded pass defends,
To fight like fabled demi-gods they came,
Their age, their ardor, and their force the same;
French, English, Lorrainese in combat close,
And in one stream the mingled slaughter flows.
Oh thou! the genius of that fatal day,
Soul of the strife, destroying angel, say,
Whose was the triumph then; which hero's host
Yourself assisted, and heaven favored most?
Long time the chiefs with rival glory crowned,
Dealt equal slaughter through the legions round;
At length, by factious rage in vain assailed,
The righteous cause and Henry's arms prevailed;
Worn with disastrous toil and long fatigue,
Exhausted, hopeless, fled the vanquished League.
As on Pyrenees' ever-clouded brow,
When swelling torrents threat the vale below,
A while with solid banks and lofty mounds,
They stay the foaming deluge in its bounds;
But soon, the barrier broke, the rushing tide
Roars unresisted down the mountain's side,
Uproots the forest oaks, and bears away,
Flocks, folds and herds, an undistinguished prey:
So from the smoking walls with matchless force,
Victorious Bourbon urged his rapid course,
Such havoc where the royal warrior passed,
Deformed the ranks and laid the battle waste.
At length the friendly gates, by Mayenne's com-
mand

Flung wide, received the desolated band,
The victor hosts around the suburbs fly
Incensed, and hurl the blazing torch on high,
Their temperate valor kindles into rage,
And spoil and plunder are the war they wage.
Henry perceived it not; with eager flight
He chased the foe, dispersed before his sight;
Spurred by his courage, with success elate
And ardent joy, he reached the hostile gate,
Thence on his scattered force aloud he calls,
"Haste, fly my friends, and scale the haughty walls."
When suddenly in rolling clouds enshrined,
A beauteous form came floating on the wind,
With gracious mien and awful to the view,
Towards Henry the descending vision flew,
His brow was with immortal splendor graced,
And horror mixed with love his radiant eyes expressed.
"Hold, hapless conqueror of your native land!"
The phantom cried, "and stay your vengeful hand;
This fair dominion you with war deface,
Is yours of old, the birthright of your race;
These lives you seek, are vassals of your throne,
This wealth you give to plunder, is your own;
Spare your own heritage, nor seek to reign
A solitary monarch o'er the slain."
Amazed the soldier heard the solemn sound,
And dropped his spoils, and prostrate kissed the ground.
Then Henry, rage still boiling in his breast,
Like seas hoarse murmuring while they sink to rest,
"Say bright inhabitant of heaven, what means

Your hallowed form amidst these horrid scenes?"
Mild as the breeze, at summer's evening tide
Serene, the visionary shape replied:
"Behold the sainted king whom France adores,
Protector of the Bourbon race, and yours,
That Louis, who like you once urged the fight,
Whose shrines you heed not, and whose faith you slight;
Know when the destined days their course have run,
Heaven shall itself conduct you to the throne;
Thine is the victory, but that great reward,
Is for thy mercy, not thy might, prepared."
He spoke, the listening chief with rapture hears,
And down his cheek fast flow the joyful tears;
Peace soothed his tranquil heart, he dropped his sword,
And on his knees devout the shade adored.
Then twice around his neck his arms he flung,
And thrice deceived on vain embraces hung;
Light as an empty dream at break of day,
Or as a blast of wind, he rushed away.
Meanwhile in haste to guard the invested town,
The swarming multitude the ramparts crown,
Thick from above a fiery flood they pour,
And at the monarch aim the fatal shower,
But heaven's bright influence, round his temples shed,
Diverts the storm, and guards his sacred head.
'Twas then he saw, protected as he stood,
What thanks to his paternal saint he owed;
Towards Paris his sad eye in sorrow thrown,
"Ye French!" he cried, "and thou ill-fated town,
Ye citizens, a blind deluded horde,

How long will you withstand your lawful lord!"
Nor more; but as the star that brings the day,
At eve declining in his western way,
More mildly shoots his horizontal fires,
And seems an ampler globe as he retires,
Such from the walls the parting hero turned,
While all his kindred saint within his bosom burned.
Vincennes he sought, where Louis whilom spoke
His righteous laws beneath an aged oak.
Vincennes,[1] alas! no more a calm retreat,
How art thou changed, thou once delightful seat!
Thy rural charms, thy peaceful smiles are fled,
And blank despair possesses thee instead.
'Tis there the great, their hapless labors done,
And all the short-lived race of glory run,
The fickle changes of their various lot
Conclude, and die neglected and forgot.
Now night o'er heaven pursued her dusky way,
And hid in shades the horrors of the day.

[1] It is well known how many illustrious prisoners the Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin confined at Vincennes.

CANTO VII.

The Argument.

Henry IV. is transported in a vision by St. Louis to heaven, and the infernal regions. He arrives at the palace of the Destinies; where he has an opportunity of seeing his posterity, and the great men hereafter to be produced in France.

The great, the boundless clemency of God,
To soothe the ills of life's perplexing road,
Sweet sleep, and hope, two friendly beings gave,
Which earth's dark, gloomy confines never leave.
When man, fatigued by labors of the day,
Has toiled his spirits and his strength away,
That, nature's friend, restores her powers again,
And brings the blest forgetfulness of pain.
This, oft deceitful, but forever kind,
Diffuses warmth and transport through the mind.
From her the few, whom heaven approves, may learn
The pleasing issue of each high concern,
Pure as her author in the realms above
To them she brings the tidings of his love.
Immortal Louis bid the faithful pair
Expand their downy wings, and soften Henry's care.
Still sleep repairs to Vincennes' shady ground;
The winds subside, and silence reigns around.
Hope's blooming offspring, happy dreams succeed,
And give the pleasing, though ideal meed.

The verdant olive, and the laurel bough,
Entwined with poppies, grace the hero's brow.
On Bourbon's temples Louis placed the crown
Whose radiant honors once adorned his own.
"Go, reign," he cried, "and triumph o'er thy foes;
No other hope the race of Louis knows.
Yet think diviner presents to receive,
Far more, my son, than royalty I give.
What boots renown in arms, should heaven withhold
Her light more precious than the purest gold?
These worldly honors are a barren good;
Rewards uncertain on the brave bestowed:
A transient greatness, and a fading wreath
Blasted by troubles, and destroyed by death.
Empire more durable, for thee designed,
I come to show thee, and inform thy mind.
Attend my steps through paths thou ne'er hast trod,
And fly to meet the bosom of thy God."
Thus spoke the saint; they mount the car of light,
And swiftly traverse the ethereal height.
Thus midnight lightnings flash, while thunders roll,
And cleave the ambient air from pole to pole.
Thus rose Elijah on the fiery cloud;
The radiant ether with effulgence glowed:
To purer worlds, arrayed in glories bright,
The prophet fled, and vanished from the sight.
Amidst those orbs which move by certain laws
Known to each sage whom love of science draws,
The sun, revolving round his axis turns,
Shines undiminished, and forever burns.
Thence spring those golden torrents, which bestow
All vital warmth, and vigor as they flow.

From thence the welcome day, and year proceeds;
Through various worlds his genial influence spreads.
The rolling planets beam with borrowed rays,
And all around reflect the solar blaze;
Attract each other, and each other shun:
And end their courses where they first begun.
Far in the void unnumbered worlds arise,
And suns unnumbered light the azure skies.
Far beyond all the God of heaven resides,
Marks every orbit, every motion guides.
Thither the hero and the saint repair;
Myriads of spirits are created there,
Which amply people all the globe, and fill
The human body; such the Almighty's will.
There, with immortal spirits at His feet,
The Judge incorruptible holds His seat.
The God eternal, in all climes adored
By different names, Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.
Before His throne our plaintive sorrows rise;
Our errors He beholds with pitying eyes:
Those senseless portraits, figured by mankind,
To paint His image, and omniscient mind.
All who on earth's inferior confines breathe,
Attend His summons through the gates of death:
The Eastern sage, with holy wisdom fraught,
The sons of science, whom Confucius taught;
Those who succeed in Zoroaster's cause,
And blindly yield submission to his laws:
The pale inhabitants of Zembla's coast,
That dreary region of eternal frost;
America's sons, with fatal error blind,
Where truth illumines not the savage mind.
The gazing Dervish looks in vain around

At God's right hand no prophet to be found.
The Bonze, with gloomy, penitential brow,
Derives no comfort from his rigid vow.
At once enlightened, all the dead await
To hear their sentence, and approaching fate.
That mighty Being, whose extended view,
And boundless knowledge looks all nature through,
The past, the present, and the future times,
Rewards their love, or punishes their crimes.
The prince approached not, in those realms of light,
The throne invisible to human sight;
Whence issues forth the terrible decree
Which man presumes too fondly to foresee.
Is God, said Henry to himself, unjust,
On whom the world's created beings trust?
Will the Almighty not vouchsafe to save
For want of knowledge which He never gave?
Expect religion where it never shone;
And judge the universe by laws unknown?
His hand created all, and all will find
That heaven's high king is merciful, and kind.
His voice informs the whole, and every part;
Fair nature's laws are stamped on every heart.
Nature, the same through each inferior clime,
Pure, and unspotted to the end of time,
By this the pagan's sentence will proceed,
And pagan virtue is religion's deed.
While thus, with reason narrow, and confined,
On truths mysterious he employed his mind,
A solemn, awful voice was heard around;
All heaven, all nature shuddered at the sound.
Such were the thunders, which from Sinai's brow,
Diffused a horror through the plains below.

Each seraph glowed with adoration's fire,
And silence reigned through all the cherub choir.
The rolling spheres the sacred accents caught,
And truths divine to other planets taught.
Distrust thy mental powers, nor blindly stray
As pride, or feebler reason points the way,
The High Invisible who rules above,
Escapes thy knowledge, but demands thy love.
His power, and justice punish, and control
Each wilful error of the stubborn soul.
To pure devotion be thy heart consigned,
Truth's radiant orb illumine all thy mind.
These were the sounds, when, through the fields of light,
A rapid whirlwind from the ethereal height
Conveyed the prince to dark, and dreary climes,
Like those where Chaos reigned in elder times.
No solar influence, like its author mild,
Diffuses comfort through the savage wild.
Angels abhor the desolated waste,
Which life's fair, fruitful blossom never graced.
Confusion, death, each terror of despair,
Fixed on his throne, presides a tyrant there.
O heavens! what shrieks of woe, what piteous cries,
What sulphurous smokes, what horrid flames arise!
"What fiends," cried Bourbon, "to these climes retreat!
What gulfs, what torrents burst beneath our feet!"
"See here," the saint returned, "the gates of hell,
Which justice formed, where impious spirits dwell.
Come, view the dismal regions of distress;
These paths are always easy of access."
There squint-eyed Envy lay, whose poisonous breath

Consumes the verdure of each laurel wreath:
In night's impenetrable darkness bred,
She hates the living, but applauds the dead.
Her sparkling eyes, which shun the orb of day,
Perceiving Henry, Envy turned away.
Near her, self-loving, self-admiring Pride,
And downcast Weakness, ever pale, reside.
Weakness, which yields to each persuasive crime,
And crops the flower of virtue in its prime.
Ambition there with headstrong fury raves,
With thrones surrounded, sepulchres, and slaves.
Submissive, meek Hypocrisy was nigh,
Hell in her heart, all heaven in her eye.
There Interest, father of all crimes, appeared,
And blinded Zeal by cruelty revered.
These wild, tyrannic rulers of mankind,
When Henry came, their savage air resigned.
Their impious troop ne'er reached his purer soul,
Such virtue yields not to their mad control.
"Who comes," they cried, "to break the peaceful rest
Of night eternal, and these shades molest?"
Our hero viewed the subterranean scene,
And slowly travelled through the ranks obscene.
Louis led on.—Oh heaven! is that the hand,
Which murdered Valois at the League's command?
Is that the monster? yes, I know him well,
His arm still holds the parricidal steel.
While barbarous priests proclaim the wretch divine,
And place his portrait on the hallowed shrine,
Though Rome, and faction celebrate his name
To hymns, and praises hell denies his claim.
"Princes, and kings," the honored saint replied,

"Meet in these realms the punishment of pride.
Behold those tyrants, once adored by all,
Whose height but served to aggrandize their fall.
God pours His vengeance on the sceptred crowd,
For vice committed, and for crimes allowed.
Death, from on high commissioned to destroy,
Cut short the transport of each wayward joy.
No pomp of greatness could the victim save;
Their beams of glory set within the grave.
Now is no civil, sly deceiver near,
To whisper error in the sovereign's ear.
Once injured truth the sword of terror draws;
Displays each crime, and indicates her cause.
Behold yon heroes tremble at her nod,
Esteemed as tyrants in the eyes of God.
Now on their heads descend those thunders dire,
Formed by themselves to set the world on fire.
Close by their side, the weakest of mankind,
Each listless, feeble monarch is reclined;
Whose indolence disgraced the subject land,
Mere airy forms, mere nothings in command.
Sinister counsellors on these await,
Once their imperious ministers of state.
Proud, avaricious, of immortal lives,
Who sold what honors Mars, or Themis gives:
Sold what our fathers purchased by their blood,
And all that's precious to the great, and good."

"Tell me," said Henry, "O ye sons of ease,
Must tender spirits dwell in climes like these?
You, who, on flowery couches, pass away
The tranquil moments of life's useless day.
Shall virtue's friends in fiery torments roll?
Whose faults have risen from expanse of soul.

Shall one mistaken, momentary joy
Maturer Wisdom's plenteous fruits destroy?
This," cried the prince, "the lot of human race?
Condemned for endless ages to distress!
If all mankind one common hell devours,
Eternal tortures close our transient hours,
Who was not more in non-existence blest?
Who would not perish at his mother's breast?
Far happier man! had God's creative hand
Formed him less free, in innocence to stand:
Had God, thus awfully severe, bestowed
The sole capacity of doing good."
"Think not," the saint replied, "that sinners feel
Vengeance too heavy, or deserve not hell.
Think not the great Creator of mankind
To these His works is cruel, or unkind.
Lord of all beings, He presides above
With mercy infinite, and boundless love.
Though mortals see the tyrant in their God,
Parental tenderness directs His rod.
Let not these horrid scenes thy soul alarm;
Compassion checks the fury of his arm:
Nor endless punishments inflicts on those
Whose faults from human imperfection rose:
Whose pleasures, followed by remorse, have been
The transient cause of momentary sin."
Such were his accents—to the realms of light
Both are conveyed with instantaneous flight.
Infernal darkness shuns those flowery plains
Where spotless innocence forever reigns.
There in the floods of purest ether play
The beams refulgent of eternal day.
Each blooming scene seraphic joys bestowed;

And Henry's soul with unknown raptures glowed.
There tranquil pleasure spreads her every charm
Which thought can fancy, or which heaven can form.
No cares solicit, and no passions move;
But all is governed by angelic love.
Far other love, than that of wild desires,
Which grosser sense, and luxury inspires.
The bright, the sacred flame on earth unknown,
Which burns in heaven, and heavenly minds alone.
Its chaste endearments all their hours employ,
And endless wishes meet with endless joy.
There dwell true heroes; there each pious sage,
And monarchs once the glory of their age.
Thence Charlemagne, and Clovis turn their eyes
On Gallia's empire from the azure skies:
On golden thrones forever placed sublime,
And clad in honors unimpaired by time.
There, fiercest foes the happy union prove
Of pure affection, and a brother's love.
Louis the Wise, amidst the royal band,
Tall as a cedar issues his command.
Louis, of France the glory, and the pride,
Who ruled our realms with justice by his side.
Oft would he pardon, oft relief supply;
And wipe the falling tear from every eye.
D'Amboise is still commissioned to attend;
His faithful minister, and warmest friend.
To him alone was Gallia's honor dear:
To him alone her homage was sincere.
His gentler hands were sullied not with blood;
His every wish was centred in her good.
Oh spotless manners! bright, and halcyon days!
Worthy eternal memory, and praise.

Then wholesome laws adorned, and blessed the State:
Subjects were happy, and the monarch great.
Return, ye halcyon days, with golden wing:
And equal blessings, equal honors bring.
Virtue, descend, another Louis frame
As rich in merit, and as great in fame.
Farther remote, those worthy heroes stood,
Careless of life, and prodigal of blood,
Who died with transport for the public weal;
Led on by duty, not enraged by zeal.
Brave Montmorency[1], Trimouille[2], de Foix[3],
Who sought their passage to those fields of joy.
There Guesclin[4] drinks of pleasure's purer springs:
Guesclin, the avenger, and the dread of kings.
There too appeared the Amazonian dame,[5]
The tottering throne's support, and England's shame.

---

[1] It would fill a volume should we specify the services done to the State by this family.

[2] Among many great men of this name, Guy de la Trimouille is particularly alluded to. He was surnamed "the Valiant"; carried the royal standard: and refused the high constable's sword in the reign of Charles VI.

[3] Gaston de Foix, Duke of Nemours, and nephew of Louis XII. He was slain at the famous battle of Ravenna, having received fourteen wounds and defeated the enemy.

[4] France owed her preservation to this great man, in the reign of Charles V. He conquered Castile, placed Henry de Transtamare upon the throne of Peter the Cruel, and was constable of France, and Castile.

[5] Joan d'Arc, known by the name of the Maid of Orleans. She was servant-maid at an inn; and born at the village of Domremy on the Meuse: being superior to her sex in strength of body and of mind, she was employed by the Count de Dunois to retrieve the affairs of Charles VII., taken prisoner in a sally at Compiègne in 1430, conducted to Rouen, tried as a sorceress in an ecclesiastical court, and burned by the English.

"These," cried the saint, "who now possess the skies,
Like thee with glory dazzled Europe's eyes.
Virtue alone their simpler minds could move:
The Church was nourished by their filial love.
Like me they honored truth's diviner name:
Our worship uniform, our Church the same.
Say, why does Bourbon follow other laws,
Or why defend religion's weaker cause?
"Time, with incessant flight prepared to roam,
Quits, and revisits this terrific dome:
And pours with plenteous hand on all mankind
The good, and evil for each race designed.
An altar high of massy iron bears
The fatal annals of succeeding years.
Where God's own hand has marked, nor marked in vain
Each transient pleasure, each severer pain.
There liberty, that haughty slave, is bound,
With chains invisible encircled round.
Beneath the yoke she bends her stubborn head,
Still unconstrained, unconscious of the deed.
This suppliant turn that hidden chain supplies
Wisely concealed forever from her eyes.
The fates appear her sentence to fulfil:
Each action seems the product of free-will."
"From thence," cried Louis, "on the human race
Descends the influence of heavenly grace.
In future times its power thy tongue shall tell:
Its purer radiance all thy heart shall feel.
Those precious moments God alone bestows;
No mortal hastens, and no being knows.
But Oh how slowly comes that period on

When God shall love, and own thee for His son!
Too long shall weakness hide thy brighter rays;
And lead thy steps through errors slippery ways.
Teach him, kind heaven, the happier, better road;
Shorten the days which part him from his God."
But see what crowds in long succession press
Through the vast region of unbounded space.
These sacred mansions to thy view display
The unborn offspring of some future day.
All times, and places are forever nigh,
All beings present to Jehovah's eye.
Here fate has marked their destined hour of birth,
Their rise, their grandeur, and their fall on earth.
The various changes of each life to come,
Their vices, virtues, and their final doom.
Draw near, for heaven allows us to foresee
What kings, and heroes shall descend from thee.
That graceful personage is Bourbon's son,
Formed to support the glory of the crown.
The warlike leader shall his triumphs boast
O'er Belgia's plains, and proud Iberia's coast.
To deeds more noble shall his son aspire;
And wreaths more splendid first adorn his sire.
On beds of lilies, near a towering throne,
Two radiant forms before our hero shone.
Monarchs they seemed, of high, imperious pride,
And Roman purple flowed adown their side.
A subject nation couched beneath their feet,
And guards unnumbered formed the train complete.
"These," said the saint, "are doomed to endless fame:
In all things sovereign, save the royal name.
Richelieu, and Mazarin, designed by fate

Immortal ministers of Gallia's State.
To them shall policy consign her aid;
And fortune raise them from the altar's shade.
Ruled by despotic power, shall France confess
Great Richelieu's genius, Mazarin's address.
One flies[1] with art before the rising storm:
One braves all danger in its fiercest form.
Both to the princes of our royal blood
With hate relentless enemies avowed.
With high ambition, and with pride inspired,
By all disliked and yet by all admired.
Their artful schemes, and industry shall bring
Plagues on their country, glory on their king.
"O thou, great Colbert,[2] whose enlightened mind
Schemes less extensive for our good designed!
No lustre equals, none excels thy own,
Save that which gilds, and decorates the crown.
Nursed by thy genius, heaven-born plenty reigns,
And pours her treasures over Gallia's plains.
Colbert by generous deeds to glory rose:
His only vengeance was to bless his foes.
Thus were dispensed the gifts of heavenly grace,
By God's own confidant on Israel's race.
That race, whose blasphemy could ne'er remove,
Or quench the beams of mercy, and of love.

---

[1] Cardinal Mazarin was obliged to leave the kingdom in 1651; notwithstanding that he had the entire government of the queen regent. Cardinal Richelieu, on the contrary, always maintained his situation in spite of his enemies, and of the king, who was disgusted at his behavior.

[2] Colbert was detested by the people. That blind and savage monster would have dug his body out of the ground; but the approbation of men of sense, which at length prevailed, has rendered his name forever dear, and respectable.

"What troops of slaves before that monarch[1] stand!
What numbers tremble at his high command!
No king did Gallia ever yet obey
With such profound submission to his sway.
Though less beloved, more dreaded in her eyes,
Like thee he claims fair glory's richest prize.
Firm in all danger, in success too warm
When fortune smiles, and conquest meets his arm.
Himself shall crush, superior to intrigue,
Full twenty nations joined in powerful league.
Praise shall attend him to his latest breath,
Great in his life, but greater in his death.
Thrice happy age! when nature's lavish hand
With all her graces shall adorn the land.
Thrice happy age! when every art refined
Spreads her fair polish o'er the ruder mind.
The muse forever our retreats shall love
More than the shades of Aganippe's grove.
From sculptured stone the seeming accent flows;
With animated tints the canvas glows.
What sons of science in that period rise,
Measure the universe, and read the skies!
The purer ray of philosophic light
Reveals all nature, and dispels the night.
Presumptuous error from their view retreats;
Truth crowns their labors, and their joy completes.
Thy accents too, sweet music, strike mine ear,
Music, descended from the heavenly sphere.
'Tis thine to soothe, to soften, and control
Each wayward passion of the ruffled soul.
Unpolished Greece, and Italy have owned

[1] Louis XIV.

The strong enchantments of thy magic sound.
The subjects ruled by Gallia's powerful king
Shall bravely conquer, and as sweetly sing.
Shall join the poet's to the warrior's praise,
And twine Bellona's with Apollo's bays.
E'en now I see this second age of gold
Produce a people of heroic mould.
Here numerous armies skim before my sight;
There fly the Bourbons eager for the fight.
At once his master's terror, and support,
Great Condé[1] makes the flames of war his sport.
Turenne more calmly meets the hostile power,
In arms his equal, and in wisdom more.
Assemblage rare! in Catinat[2] are seen
The hero's talents, and the sage's mien.
Known by his compass Vauban[3] from the tower

[1] Louis de Bourbon, generally called the Great Condé; and Henry, Viscount de Turenne, have been looked upon as the greatest generals of their time. They have both gained very important victories, and acquired glory even in their defeats. The Prince of Condé's genius seemed, as it was said, more proper for a day of battle, and that of Turenne for a whole campaign. It is certain at least, that Turenne gained considerable advantages over the Great Condé at Gien, Etampes, Paris, Arras, and the battle of Dunes. We shall not, however, attempt to determine which was the greater man.

[2] The Marshal de Catinat was born in 1637; he gained the battles of Staffarde and Marseilles: and obeyed, without reluctance, or murmuring, the Marshal de Villeroi, who, sent him orders without consulting him. He resigned his command with the utmost composure; never complained of any person's treatment, asked nothing of the king, and died like a true philosopher at his country-seat at St. Gratien. He never augmented or diminished his estate, and never for a moment acted unworthy of his character as a man of temperance and moderation.

[3] The Marshal de Vauban, born in 1633, the greatest engineer that ever lived. He repaired upon a new plan of his own no less than three hundred old fortifications, and

Smiles at the tumult, and the cannon's roar.
England shall tell of Luxembourg's[1] renown,
In war invincible, at court unknown.
Onward I see the martial Villars[2] move
To wrest the thunder from the bird of Jove.
Conquest attends to bid the battle cease,
And leaves him sovereign arbiter of peace.

---

built thirty-three. He conducted fifty-three sieges, and was present at one hundred and forty actions. He left behind him at his death twelve manuscript volumes full of designs for the good of the State: none of which has ever yet been executed. He was a member of the Academy of Sciences, and did more honor to it than any other person, by rendering mathematics subservient to the advantage of his country.

[1] Francis Henry de Montmorency, who took the name of Luxembourg; Marshal of France, and both duke and peer of the realm. He gained the battle of Cassel, under the direction of Monsieur, the brother of Louis XIV., and won the celebrated victories of Mons, Fleurus, Steinkirk and Neerwindin, where he acted as commanding officer. He was confined in the Bastille, and exceedingly ill treated by the ministry.

[2] It was the author's original design to mention no living character through the whole poem: and the rule proposed has only been deviated from in favor of the Marshal Duke de Villars. He gained the battle of Friedlingen, and that of the first Höchstädt. It is remarkable that in this engagement he posted himself on the same spot of ground which the Duke of Marlborough afterward occupied, when he won that very signal victory of the second Höchstädt, so fatal to France. Upon resuming the command of the army, the marshal was afterward engaged in the famous battle of Blangis, or Malplaquet, in which twenty thousand of the enemy were slain; and the loss of which was owing to the marshal's being wounded. In 1712, when the enemy threatened to proceed to Paris, and it was deliberated whether Louis XIV. should not quit Versailles, the Marshal de Villars defeated Prince Eugene at Denain, dislodged the enemy from their post at Marchienne, raised the siege of Landrecy, took Douay, Quesnoy, and Bouchain at discretion, and afterward agreed upon a peace at Rastadt in the king's name, with the same Prince Eugene, the emperor's plenipotentiary.

Denain shall own brave Villars to have been
The worthy rival of the great Eugene.
"What princely youth[1] draws near, whose manly face
United majesty, and sweetness grace?
See how unmoved—Oh heavens! what sudden shade
Conceals the beauties which his form displayed!
Death flutters round; health, beauty, all are gone:
He falls when ready to ascend the throne.
Heaven formed him all that's truly just, and good:
Descended, Bourbon, from thy royal blood.
Oh gracious God! shall fate but show mankind
A flower so sweet, and virtues so refined!
What could a soul so generous not obtain!
What joys would France experience from his reign!
Produced, and nurtured by his fostering hand
Fair peace, and plenty had enriched the land.
Each day some new beneficence had brought:
Oh how shall Gallia weep! alarming thought!
When one dark, silent sepulchre contains
The son's, the mother's, and the sire's remains.
"Fallen is the tree, and from its ruins springs
An infant successor to Gallia's kings.
A tender shoot, from whose increasing shade
France may derive some salutary aid.
Conduct him, Fleury, to the throne of truth.
Wait on his years, and cultivate his youth.
Teach him self-knowledge, and, if Fleury can,
Teach him that Louis is no more than man.
Inspire each virtue which can life adorn;
Kings for their subjects, not themselves are born.

[1] This poem was composed in the infancy of Louis XV.

And thou, O France, once more arise to day;
Resume thy majesty beneath his sway.
Let every science, which retired before,
Crown thy fair temples, and adorn thy shore.
The azure waters with thy navies sweep:
So wills the monarch of the briny deep.
See, from the Nile, the Euxine, and the Ind,
Each port by nature, or by art designed,
Commerce aloud demands thee for her seat;
And spreads her richest treasures at thy feet.
Adieu to terror, and adieu to war,
The peaceful olive be thy future care.
"Pursued by envy, and distraction's crew,
A chief renowned[1] advances to the view;
Easy, not weak, when glory spurs him on,
Engaged by novelties, by trifles won.
Though luxury displays a thousand charms,
And smiling pleasure courts him to her arms,
Yet shall he keep all Europe in suspense
By artful politics, and manly sense.
The world shall move as Orleans shall guide;
And every science flourish at his side.
Empire, my son, himself shall never reach;
'Tis his the art of government to teach.
"Now burst the lightning from the opening skies,
And Gallia's standard waved before their eyes.
Iberia's troops, arrayed in arms complete,
The German eagle crushed beneath their feet.
When thus the saint—no more remains the trace
Of Charles the Fifth, his glory, or his race.
Each earthly being has its final hour;

[1] A true portrait of the Duke of Orleans.

Eternal wisdom let us all adore.
From here all human revolutions spring:
E'en Spain from Bourbon shall request a king.
Illustrious Philip shall receive the crown;
And sit as monarch on Iberia's throne.
Surprise was soon succeeded by delight,
And Henry's soul enraptured at the sight.
Repress thy transports, cried the saint, and dread
This great event, this present to Madrid.
Say, who can fathom heaven's concealed intent,
Dangers may come, and Paris may repent.
Oh Philip! Oh my sons! shall France and Spain
Thus meet, and never be disjoined again!
How long shall fatal politics forbear
To light the flames of discord, and of war!"
Thus Louis spoke—when lo! the scene withdrew,
Each object vanished from our hero's view.
The sacred portals closed before his eyes,
And sudden darkness overspread the skies.
Far in the east Aurora moving on
Unlocked the golden chambers of the sun.
Night's sable robe o'er other climes was spread,
Each dream retired, and every flitting shade.
The prince arose, with heavenly ardor fired,
Unusual vigor all his soul inspired.
Fear, and respect, great Bourbon, now were thine:
Full on thy brow sat majesty divine.
Thus when before the tribes great Moses stood,
Returned at length from Sinai, and from God,
His eyeballs flashed intolerable light;
Each prostrate Hebrew shuddered at the sight.

CANTO VIII.

The Argument.

The Earl of Egmont comes to assist Mayenne and the League. Battle of Ivry, in which Mayenne is defeated and Egmont slain. Valor, and clemency of Henry the Great.

Dejected by their loss, the states appear
Less haughty, and assume an humbler air,
Henry, such terror in their hearts had wrought,
Their king-creating schemes were all forgot;
Wavering and weak in counsel, and afraid
To crown their idol Mayenne, or to degrade,
By vain decrees they labor to complete
And ratify a power, not given him yet.
This self-commissioned chief,[1] this king uncrowned
In chains of iron rule his faction bound;
His willing slaves obedient to his laws,
Resolve to fight and perish in his cause;
Thus flushed with hope, to council he convenes
The haughty lords, on whom his fortune leans.
They come: despair, and unextinguished hate,
And malice on their faded features sate;
Some tremble in their pace, and feebly tread,
Faint with the loss of blood in battle shed,
But keen resentment prompts them to repair

[1] He was declared by the parliament, which continued attached to him, lieutenant-general of the state and kingdom of France.

Their losses, and revenge the wounds they bear.
Before the chief their sullen ranks they range,
And grasp their shining arms, and vow revenge.
So the firece sons of earth, as fable feigns,
Where Pelion overlooks Thessalia's plains,
With mountains piled on mountains, vainly strove,
To scale the everlasting throne of Jove.
When sudden on a car of radiant light
Exalted, Discord flashed upon their sight;
"Courage," she said, "'tis now the times demand
Your fixed resolves, lo! succor is at hand."
First ran d'Aumale, and joyful from afar
Beheld the Spanish lances gleam in air;
Then cried aloud, "'Tis come; the expected aid,
So oft demanded, and so long delayed."
Near to that hallowed spot, where rest revered
The relics of our kings, their march appeared;
The groves of polished spears, the targets bound
With circling gold, the shining helms around,
Against the sun with full reflection play,
Rival his light and shed a second day.
To meet their march the roaring rabble went,
And hailed the mighty chief Madrid had sent;
That chief was Egmont;[1] famed for martial fire,
Ambitious son of an unhappy sire;
At Brussels first he drew the vital air;
His country's weal was all his father's care,
For that, the rage of tyrants he defied,
And in the cause of freedom, bravely died.
The servile son, as base as he was proud,
Fawned on that hand which shed his father's blood,

[1] The Earl of Egmont, son of Admiral Egmont, who was beheaded at Brussels, together with the Count de Horn.

For sordid interest joined his country's foes,
And fought for France, regardless of her woes.
Philip, on Mayenne the warlike youth bestowed,
And armed him forth to be his guardian god;
Nor doubted Mayenne, but slaughter and dismay
Should spread to Bourbon's tent, when Egmont led
the way.
With heedless arrogance their march they drew,
And Henry's heart exulted at the view,
Gods! how his eager hopes anticipate
And meet the moment that decides his fate.
Their streams where Iton and fair Eura lead,
By nature blest, a fertile plain is spread,
No wars had yet approached the peaceful scene,
Nor warrior's footstep pressed the flowery green,
The shepherds there, while civil rage destroyed
The regions round, their happy hours enjoyed,
Screened by their poverty, they seemed secure
From lawless rapine and the soldier's power,
Nor heard beneath their humble roofs the jar
Of arms, or clamor of the sounding war.
Thither each hostile leader his array
Directs, and desolation marks their way,
A sudden horror strikes the trembling floods,
The frighted shepherds seek the sheltering woods,
The partners of their grief attend their flight,
And bear their weeping infants from the sight.
Ye hapless natives of this sweet recess!
Charge not at least your king with your distress,
For peace he courts the combat, and his hand
Shall shed the bounteous blessing o'er the land;
He shares your sorrows, and shall end your woes,
Nor seeks you, but to save you from your foes.

Along the ranks he darts his glancing eyes,
Swift as the winds his foaming courser flies,
Proud of his load, he catches with delight
The trumpets' sound, and hopes the promised fight.
Crowned with his laurels, at their master's side,
A well-distinguished group of warriors ride,
D'Aumont,[1] beneath five kings a chief renowned,
Biron,[2] whose name bore terror in the sound,
His son,[3] whom toil nor danger could restrain,
Who soon alas!—but he was faithful then;
Grillon and Sully by the guilty feared,
Chiefs whom the League detested, yet revered,
Turenne,[4] whose virtues and unrivalled fame,
Won the fair honors of the Bouillon name,
Ill-fated power alas! and ill-maintained,
Crushed in the birth, and lost as soon as gained.
His crest amid the band brave Essex rears,
And like a palm beneath our skies appears,
Among our elms the lofty stranger shoves
His growth, as if he scorned the native groves.
From his bright casque with Orient gems arrayed

---

[1] John d'Aumont, Marshal of France, who did wonders at the battle of Ivry, was the son of Peter d'Aumont and Frances de Sully, an heiress of the ancient family of Sully. He served under Henry II., Francis II., Charles II., Henry III., and Henry IV.

[2] Henry de Gontaut de Biron, Marshal of France, and grand master of the artillery. He was a great warrior, commanded the corps de reserve at Ivry, and was very instrumental in gaining the victory.

[3] Charles Gontaut de Biron, son of the former. He conspired afterward against Henry IV. and was beheaded in the court of the Bastille in 1602.

[4] Henry de la Tour d'Auvergne, Viscount of Turenne, Marshal of France. Henry the Great married him to Charlotte de la Mark, princess of Sedan, in 1591. The marshal went on the wedding night to take Stenay by assault.

And burnished gold, a starry lustre played;
Dear, valued gifts! with which his mistress strove
Less to reward his courage, than his love.
Ambitious chief! the mighty bulwark grown
Of Gallia's prince, and darling of his own.
Such was the monarch's train, with steadfast air
And firm, they wait the signal of the war,
Glad omens from their Henry's eyes they took,
And read their conquest sure in his inspiring look.
'Twas then, afflicted with inglorious dread,
Unhappy Mayenne perceived his courage fled,
Whether at length his boding heart divines
The wrath of heaven on his unjust designs,
Whether the soul prophetic of our doom,
Foresees the dreary train of ills to come,
Whate'er the cause, he feels a chilling fear,
But veils it with a show of seeming cheer,
Inspires his troops with ardor of renown,
And fills their hearts with hopes that dwell not in his own.
But Egmont at his side, with glory fired,
And the rash confidence his youth inspired,
Flushed for the fight, and eager to display
His prowess, chides his infamous delay.
As when the Thracian courser from afar,
Hears the shrill trumpet and the sound of war,
A martial fire informs his vivid eye,
He neighs, he snorts, he bears his head on high,
Impatient of restraint he scorns the rein,
Springs o'er the fence and scours along the plain;
Such Egmont seemed, with beating heart he stood,
And in his eye the rage of battle glowed.
Even now he ponders his approaching fame,

And looks on conquest as his rightful claim;
Alas! he dreams not that his pride shall gain
Naught but a grave, in Ivry's fatal plain.
Bourbon at length drew near, and thus inspired
His ardent warriors whom his presence fired:
"Ye sons of France! your king is at your head,
You see your foes, then follow where I lead,
Mark well this waving plume amid the fight,
Nor let the tempest shade it from your sight,
To that alone direct your constant aim,
Still sure to find it in the road to fame."
Thus spoke the chief; his bands exulting hear,
And with new fury court the glorious war;
Then marched, and as he went, his pious breast
With silent prayers the God of hosts addressed.
At once the legions rush with headlong pace
Behind their chiefs, and snatch the middle space.
So where the seas with narrow Frith divide
Cantabria's coasts from Afric's desert side,
If eastern storms along the channel pour,
Sudden the fierce conflicting oceans roar,
Earth trembles at the shock, the sheeted brine
Invades the skies, the sun forgets to shine,
The trembling Moor believes all nature hurled
In ruin, and expects the falling world.
Now lengthened with the spear the musket spread
The carnage wide, and flew with double speed,
That fatal engine in Bayonne designed,
And framed by Discord to lay waste mankind,
Strikes a twin death, and can at once afford
The worst effect of fire, and havoc of the sword.
Trembled the steadfast earth beneath their feet
As sword to sword and lance to lance they meet,

From rank to rank despair and horror strode,
The shame of flight and impious thirst of blood.
Here from his stronger son the father flies,
There by the brother's arm the brother dies,
Nature was shocked, and Eura's conscious bank
Shrank with abhorrence from the blood it drank.
Bourbon his path right on to glory clears
Through bristling forests of extended spears,
O'er many a crested helm his course he sped;
Close in his rear, serene and undismayed
Went Mornay, thoughtful and intent alone
On Henry's life, regardless of his own.
So, veiled in human shape, the poets feign
The gods engaged in arms on Phrygia's plain;
"So when an angel by divine command,
With rising tempests shakes a guilty land,
Well pleased the Almighty's orders to perform,
He rides the whirlwind, and directs the storm."
The royal chief his dread commands expressed,
The prudent dictates of a hero's breast,
Mornay the mighty charge attentive caught,
And bore it where the distant leaders fought,
The distant leaders to their troops convey
The word, their troops receive it, and obey.
They part, they join, in various forms are seen,
One soul informs and guides the vast machine.
Swift through the field returned in haste he seeks
The prince, accosts, and guards him while he speaks.
But still the stoic warrior kept unstained
With human blood, his inoffensive hand,
The king alone employed his generous thought,
For his defence the embattled field he fought,
Detested war, and singularly brave

Knew boldly to face death, but never gave.
Turenne already with resistless power,
Repulsed the shattered forces of Nemours;
Scarce d'Ailly filled the plain, with dire alarms,
Proud of his thirty years consumed in arms;
Still spite of age the veteran chief displays
The well-strung vigor of his youthful days;
Of all his foes, one only would presume
To match his might, a hero in the bloom;
Now first indignant to the field he came,
And parted eager for the goal of fame.
New to the taste of Hymen, yet he fled
The chaste endearments of his bridal bed,
Disdained the trivial praise by beauty won,
And panted for a soldier's fame alone.
That cruel morn, accusing heaven in vain,
And the cursed League that called him to the plain,
His beauteous bride with trembling fingers laced
His heavy corslet on her hero's breast,
And covered with his helm of polished gold
Those eyes which still she languished to behold.
Towards d'Ailly the fierce youth, despising fear,
Spurred his proud steed, and couched his quivering spear,
Their headlong coursers trampled, as they fled,
The wounded heaps, the dying and the dead;
Poachy with blood the turf and matted grass,
Sink fetlock deep beneath them as they pass.
Swift to the shock they come; their shields sustain
The blow, their spears well pointed but in vain,
In scattered splinters shine upon the plain.
So when two clouds with thunder fraught draw near,

And join their dark encounter in mid air,
Struck from their sides the lightning quivers round,
Heaven roars, and mortals tremble at the sound.
Now from their steeds with unabated rage
Alighting swift, a closer war they wage;
Ran Discord to the scene, and near her stood
Death's horrid spectre, pale and smeared with blood.
Already shine their falchions in their hands,
No kind preventing power their rage withstands,
The doom is past, their destiny commands.
Full at each other's heart they aim alike,
Nor knows their fury at whose heart they strike;
Their bucklers clash, thick strokes descend from high,
And flakes of fire from their hard helmets fly,
Blood stains their hands, but still the tempered plate
Retards a while and disappoints their fate.
Each wondering at the long unfinished fight,
Esteems his rival and admires his might;
'Till d'Ailly with a vigorous effort found
The fatal pass, and stretched him on the ground.
His faded eyes forever closed remain,
And his loose helmet rolls along the plain;
Then saw the wretched chief, too surely known,
The kindred features, and embraced his son.
But soon with horror and remorse oppressed,
Reversed the guilty steel against his breast.
That just revenge his hastening friends oppose;
When furious from the dreadful scene he rose;
Forth to the woods his cheerless journey sped,
From arms forever and from glory fled,
And in the covert of a shaggy den,
Dwells a sad exile from the ways of men.

There when the dawning day salutes the skies,
And when at eve the chilling vapors rise,
His unexhausted grief still flows the same,
Still echo sighs around his son's lamented name.
Tender alarms, and boding terrors brought
The bride inquiring to the fatal spot,
Uncertain of her doom, with anxious haste
And faltering knees between the dead she passed,
Till stretched upon the plain her lord she spied,
Then shrieked, and sank expiring at his side.
The damps of death upon her temples hung,
And feeble sounds faint issued from her tongue,
Once more her eyes a last farewell assayed,
Once more her lips upon his lips she laid,
Within her arms the lifeless body pressed,
Then looked, then sighed, then died upon his breast.
Deplored examples of rebellious strife,
Ill-fated victims, father, son, and wife,
Oh may the sad remembrance of your woe,
Teach tears from ages yet unborn to flow,
With wholesome sorrow touch all future times,
And save the children from their father's crimes.
But say what chief disperses thus abroad
The flying League, what hero, or what god?
'Tis Biron, 'tis his youthful arm o'erthrows
And drives along the plain his scattered foes.
D'Aumale beheld, and maddening at the sight,
"Stand fast," he cried, "and stay your coward flight;
Friends of the Guise and Mayenne, their vengeance due
Rome and the Church and France expect from you;
Return then, and your pristine force recall,
Conquest is theirs who fight beneath d'Aumale."

Fosseuse assisting and Beauveau sustain
Their part, and rally the disordered train,
Before the van d'Aumale his station took,
And the closed lines caught courage from his look.
The chance of war now flows a backward course,
Biron in vain withstands the driving force,
Nesle and Angenne within his sight are slain,
And Parabère and Clermont press the plain,
Himself scarce lived, so fast the purple tide
Flowed from his wounds, and happier, had he died.
A death so glorious with unfading fame
Forever had adorned the hero's name.

Soon learned the royal chief to what distress
The youth was fallen, courageous in excess;
He loved him, not as monarchs condescend
To love, but well, and plainly as a friend,
Nor thought a subject's blood so mean a thing,
A smile alone o'erpaid it from a king.
Hail heaven-born friendship! the delight alone
Of noble minds, and banished from the throne.
Eager he flies, the generous fires that feed
His heart augment his vigor and his speed.
He came, and Biron kindling at the view,
His gathered strength to one last effort drew,
Cheered by the well-known voice again he plies
The sword, all force before the monarch flies,
The king redeems thee from the unequal strife
Rash youth, be faithful and deserve thy life.

Hark! a loud peal comes thundering from afar,
'Tis Discord blows afresh the flames of war,
To thwart the monarch's virtue, with new fires
His fainting foes the beldam fiend inspires:
She winds her fatal trump, the woods around

And mountains tremble at the infernal sound.
Swift to d'Aumale the baleful notes impart
Their power, he feels the summons at his heart;
Bourbon alone he seeks: the boisterous throng
Close at his heels tumultuous pour along.
So the well-scented pack, long trained to blood,
Deep in the covert of a spacious wood,
Bay the fierce boar to battle, and elate
With heedless wrath rush headlong on their fate,
The shrillness of the cheering horn provokes
Their rage, and echoes from the distant rocks.
Thus stood the monarch by the crowd enclosed,
A host against his single arm opposed,
No friend at hand, no welcome aid he found,
Abandoned, and by death encompassed round.
'Twas then his sainted sire his strength renewed
With tenfold force and vigor unsubdued,
Firm as a rock, poised on its base he stood,
That braves the blast, and scorns the dashing flood.
Who shall relate, alas! what heroes died
In that dread hour on Eura's purple side.
Shade of the first of kings, do thou diffuse
Thy spirit o'er my song, be thou my muse.
Now from afar his gathering nobles came,
They died for Bourbon, and he fought for them,
When Egmont rushed with yet unrivalled force,
To check the storm and thwart the monarch's course.
Long had the chief, misled by martial pride,
Sought Henry through the combat far and wide,
Nor cared he, so his venturous arm might meet
That strife, for aught of danger or defeat.
"Bourbon," he cried, "advance; behold a foe
Prepared to plant fresh laurels on your brow;

Now let your arm its utmost might display,
Ours be the strife, let us decide the day."
He spoke, and lo! portentous from on high
A stream of lightning shot along the sky,
Slow peals of muttering thunder growled around,
Beneath the trembling soldier shook the ground.
Egmont, alas! a flattering omen draws,
And dreams that heaven shall combat in his cause,
That partial nature in his glory shared,
And by the thunder's voice his victory declared.
At the first onset with full force applied
His driving falchion reached the monarch's side,
Fast flowed a stream of his life blood, though slight
The wound, and Egmont triumphed at the sight.
But Bourbon unconcerned received the blow,
And with redoubled ardor pressed his foe;
Pleased when the field of glory could afford
A conquest hardly earned and worthy of his sword.
The stinging smart served only to provoke
His rage, and add new vigor to his stroke.
He springs upon the blow; the champion reels,
And the keen edge within his bosom feels,
O'erthrown beneath the trampling hoof he lies,
And death's dim shadow skims before his eyes,
He sees the dreary regions of the dead,
And shrinks and shudders at his father's shade.
Then first, their leader slain, the Iberian host
Declined the fight, their vaunted spirit lost,
Like a contagion their unwarlike fear
Seized all the ranks and caught from van to rear.
General and soldier felt the same dismay,
Nor longer these command, nor those obey.
Down fall the banners, routed and o'erthrown

And yelling with unmanly shrieks they run;
Some bend the suppliant knee, submissive join
Their hands, and to the chain their wrists resign,
Some from the fierce pursuer wildly fled,
And to the river swift their footsteps sped,
There plunged downright, amid the foaming tide
They sink, and meet the death they would avoid.
The waves encumbered seem to change their course,
And the choked stream recoils upon its source.

Mayenne in the tumult of this troubled scene
Lord of himself, afflicted, yet serene,
Surveyed his loss still tranquil and sedate,
And even in ruin hoped a better fate.
D'Aumale, his eyes in burning rage suffused,
His cruel stars and dastard bands accused.
"'Tis lost," he cried, "see where the cowards fly,
Illustrious Mayenne! our task then is to die."
"Die!" said the chief, "live rather to replace
Our fortune, and sustain the cause you grace,
Live to regain the laurels we have lost,
Nor now desert us, when we need you most.
Fly then, and where they straggle o'er the plain,
Glean up the wreck and remnant of our train."
He hears, reluctant sobs his passion speaks,
And tears of anguish trickle down his cheeks,
A slow compliance sullenly he pays,
And frowning stern at the command, obeys.
Thus the proud lion whom the Moor has tamed,
And from the fierceness of his race reclaimed,
Bows down beneath his swarthy master's hand,
And bends his surly front at his command,
With lowering aspect stalks behind his lord,
And grumbles while he crouches at his word.

Meanwhile in flight unhappy Mayenne confides,
And close within the walls his shame he hides;
Prone at the monarch's feet the vanquished wait
From his award, the sentence of their fate;
When from the firmament's unfolded space
Appeared the manes of the Bourbon race;
Louis in that important hour came down,
To gaze intent upon his godlike son,
To prove if the triumphant chief could tame
His soul to mercy, and deserve his fame.
The assembled captives by their looks besought
The monarch's grace, but trembled at their lot,
When thus with gentle, but determined look,
The suppliant crowd the mighty chief bespoke.
"Be free, and use your freedom as you may,
Free to take arms against me, or obey;
On Mayenne or me let your election rest,
His be the sceptre who deserves it best,
Choose your own portion, your own fate decree,
Chains from the League, or victory with me."
Astonished that a king with glory crowned,
And lord of the subjected plains around,
Even in the lap of triumph should forego
His right of arms, and vantage o'er the foe,
His grateful captives hail him at his feet
Victorious, and rejoice in their defeat.
No longer hatred rankles in their minds,
His might subdued them, and his bounty binds,
Proudly they mingle with the monarch's train,
And turn their juster vengeance on Mayenne.
Now Bourbon merciful and mild had stayed
The carnage, and the soldier's wrath allayed;
No longer through the ranks he cleaves his way,

Fierce as the lion bearing on his prey,
But seems a bounteous deity, inclined
To quell the tempest, and to cheer mankind.
Peace o'er his brows had shed a milder grace,
And smoothed the warlike terrors of his face;
Snatched from the jaws of the devouring strife,
His captives feel themselves restored to life,
Their dangers he repels, their wants supplies,
And views and guards them with a parent's eyes.
Fame, the swift messenger of false and true,
Still as she flies increasing to the view,
O'er mountains and o'er seas, from clime to clime,
Expatiates, rapid as the flight of time.
Millions of piercing eyes to fame belong,
As many mouths still ply the restless tongue,
And round with listening ears her miscreant form is hung.
Where'er she roams, credulity is there,
And curiosity with craving ear,
And doubt, and hope, and ever-boding fear.
With the same speed she bears upon her wings
From far, the glory and the shame of kings,
And now unfolds them, eager to proclaim
Great Henry's deeds, and fill the nations with his name.
From Tagus swift to Po the tidings ran,
And echoed through the lofty Vatican.
Joy to the North the spreading sounds convey,
To Spain, confusion, terror and dismay.
Ill-fated Paris, and thou faithless League,
Ye priests, full-fraught with malice and intrigue,
How trembled then your temples, and what dread
Disastrous, hung o'er every guilty head!

But see your guardian deity appears,
See Mayenne returning to dispel your fears!
Though foiled, not lost, not hopeless though o'er-
thrown,
For still rebellious Paris is his own.
With specious gloss he covers his defeat,
Calls ruin, victory, and flight, retreat,
Confirms the doubtful, and with prudent aim
Seeks by concealing, to repair his shame.
Transient, alas! the joy that art supplies,
For cruel truth soon scattered the disguise,
The veil of falsehood from their fate withdrew,
And opened all its horrors to their view.
"Not thus," the fury cried, with raging mind,
"Shall Discord's power be conquered, and confined:
'Tis not for this these wretched walls have seen
Torrents of blood, and mountains of the slain:
'Tis not for this the raging fires have shone,
That hated Bourbon might enjoy the throne.
Henceforth by weakness be his mind assailed,
Weakness may triumph where the sword has failed.
Force is but vain; all other hopes are gone:
For Henry yields but to himself alone.
This day shall beauty's charms his bosom warm;
Subdue his valor, and unnerve his arm."
Thus Discord spoke; and, through the fields of
air,
Drawn by fierce hatred on her blood-stained car,
Swiftly repaired to Cytherea's grove
Assured of vengeance, and in search of love.
Clouds of thick darkness then obscured the day,
Nature turned pale, and horror marked her way.

CANTO IX.

The Argument.

Description of the temple of love. Discord implores his power to enervate the courage of Henry IV. The hero is detained some time by Madame d'Estrées, so well known under the name of the fair Gabrielle. Mornay disengages him from his mistress, and the king returns to the army.

Fixed on the borders of Idalia's coast,
Where sister realms[1] their kindred limits boast,
An ancient dome superior awe commands,
Whose strong foundations rose from nature's hands:
But labor since has polished every part,
And nature yielded to the toils of art.
Each circling plain the verdant myrtles crown,
Unknown to winter's desolating frown.
Pomona here her fruits profusely pours;
Here Flora sheds her variegated flowers.
Here, whilst spontaneous harvests fill the plains,
No season changes, and no wretch complains.
Here peace unfading soothes the sons of earth,
Such peace as reigned at nature's earlier birth.
With hand of soft indulgence she displays
Celestial quiet, and serenest days.
Here every lawn in plenty's robe is dressed,
With every sweet but innocency blessed.
From side to side the streams of music roll,

[1] Europe and Asia.

Whose soothing softness fascinates the soul.
In plaintive sonnets burns the lover's flame
Who boasts his weakness, and exults in shame.
Each day, encircled with the fragrant store,
The little godhead's smiles their prayers implore;
Eager they press to learn the poisonous art
At once to please and to enter the heart.
Delusive hope, whose charms serenely shine,
Conducts the train to love's enchanting shrine.
The beauteous graces half-unveiled advance,
Indulge the song, and join the decent dance.
Voluptuous pleasure on the velvet plain
In calm tranquillity attends the strain.
Lo! by her side the heart-enchaining sighs
Fixed silence strongly speaking to the eyes;
The amorous transports, and the soft desires,
Which fan the bosom to the fiercest fires.
Thus smiles the alluring entrance of the dome:
When far within the daring footsteps roam,
What scenes of horror round the altar roll,
And shake the libertine's presuming soul!
No sounds harmonious feast the ravished ears,
No more the lovely train of joys appears.
Conscious imprudence, murmurs, fears, and hate
With darkness blast the splendors of the state.
Stern jealousy, whose faltering step obeys
Each fell suspicion that her bliss betrays;
Ungoverned rage, with sharpest venom stored,
Rears in the van his unrelenting sword.
These malice joins, who with perfidious face
Smiles at the triumphs of the savage race.
Pensive repentance, shuddering in the rear,
Heaves the deep groan, and showers the plenteous
tear.

Full in the centre of this horrid court,
Where pleasure's fell companions all resort,
Love waves forever his fantastic rod,
At once a cruel, and a tender god.
His infant power the fates of mortals bears,
With wanton smiles dispensing peace, and wars.
Smooth flows deceit's insinuating art
Which lifts the captive, animated heart.
He counts his triumphs from the splendid throne
While prostrate sons of pride the conqueror own.
Careless of good he plies his savage skill,
And dwells applauding on each deed of ill.
Now Discord opens through the ranks of joy
Her vengeful passage to the kindred boy.
Fierce in her hand the brandished torches glow,
Her eyeballs flash, and blood distains her brow.
"Where then," she cries, "thy formidable darts!
Recline they pointed for more stubborn hearts?
If e'er my venom, mingled with thy fire,
Has fanned the flame, and raised the passion higher,
If oft for thee I trouble nature's laws,
Rise, fly to vengeance of my injured cause.
Crushed by a victor king my snakes are laid,
Who joins the olive to the laurel's shade.
Amid the tumults of a civil war
Meek-stepping Clemency attends his car;
Fixed to the standards, waving in the wind,
She soothes in Discord's spite the rebel mind.
One victory gained, my throne, my empire falls;
Lo! Henry showers his rage on Paris' walls.
He flies to fight, to conquer, and forgive;
Fast bound in brazen chains must Discord live.
'Tis thine to check the torrent of his course,

And drop soft poison on his valor's source.
Yes, bend the victim to thy conquering dart,
And quell each virtue of his stubborn heart.
Of old (and well thou knowest) thy sovereign care
Bowed great Alcides to the imperial fair.
By thee proud Antony's enervated mind
For Cleopatra's form each thought resigned;
In flight inglorious o'er the ocean hurled
For her he quits the empire of the world.
Henry alone resists thy dread command,
Go, blast the laurels in his daring hand.
His brows entwine with myrtle's amorous charms,
And sink the slumbering warrior in thy arms.
Fly to support; he shakes my tottering throne:
Go, shield an empire, and a cause thine own."
The monster spoke: the trembling roof around
Returns the horrors of the dreadful sound.
Stretched on his flowery couch, the listening god
With artful smiles consented at her nod.
Armed with his golden darts resolved he flies
Clearing the azure brightness of the skies.
With pleasures, sports, and graces in his train
The zephyrs bear him to the Gallic plain.
Straight he discovers with malicious joy
The feeble Simois and the fields of Troy;
And laughs, reflecting in those seats renowned
O'er many a palace mouldering on the ground.
Venice from far, fair city! strikes his sight,
The prodigy of earth, and art's delight;
Which towers supreme as ocean's godhead gave
Her powerful empire o'er the encircling wave.
Sicilia's plain his rapid flight retards,
Where his own genius nursed the pastoral bards.

Where fame reports through secret paths he led
The wandering waves from amorous Alpheus' bed.
Now quitting Arethusa's lovely shore
Swift to Vauclusia's seats his course he bore;
Asylum soft: in life's serener days
Where lovesick Petrarch sighed his pensive lays.
From there his eyes survey the favorite strand
Where Anet's[1] walls uprose at his command:
Where art's rich toils superior reverence claim,
And still beams forth Diana's ciphered name.
There on her tomb the joys, and graces shower
In grateful memory each fragrant flower.
Now to the wanderer Ivry's plain appears:
The monarch, ready for severer cares,
There first with softer pleasures soothes his breast,
And lulls his thunders to a transient rest.
Around his side the warrior youth displayed
Pursue the labors of the sylvan shade.
The godhead triumphs in his future pain,
Sharpens his arrows, and prepares his chain,
The winds, which erst he smoothed, his nod alarms;
He speaks, and sets the elements in arms.
From every side he calls the furious storms;
A weight of clouds the face of heaven deforms.
The impetuous torrent rushes from the sky;
The thunder rolls, the livid lightnings fly:
Each boisterous brother at his mandate springs
And earth lies shadowed with their murky wings.
Bright Phœbus sinks with night's incumbent load,
And conscious nature shudders at the god.

[1] Anet was built by Henry II. for Diana de Poitiers, whose ciphers are intermixed with all the ornaments of that castle. It is situated not far from the plains of Ivry.

O'er the dark plains through miry, dubious ways
Alone, and comfortless the monarch strays:
When watchful love displays the torch's light,
Whose twinkling radiance strikes upon his sight.
The hostile star, with fatal joy betrayed,
He swiftly follows through the dreary shade.
Such fatal joy deluded wanderers show,
Led by the vapor's transitory glow;
The guide malignant through the midnight gloom
Quits not the wretch, but leads him to his doom.
Once in the horrors of this lone retreat
Roamed a fair virgin's solitary feet.
Silent, the centre of the fort within,
She waits her father from the battle's din;
Loyal in council, veteran in the plain,
Who shone the foremost of his sovereign's train:
D'Estrées[1] her name, and nature's guardian care
Had showered her treasures to adorn the fair.
Beauty less fair the Grecian maid possessed,
Whose guilt betrayed her Menelaus' rest.
With charms inferior Cleopatra glowed,
Whose eyes the lord of Italy subdued,
While to the shore the enamored Cydnians move,
And incense shed as to the queen of love.

The nymph was now at that unsteady age
When headstrong passions all the mind engage.

[1] Gabrielle d'Estrées, of an ancient family in Picardy, daughter and granddaughter of the grand master of the ordnance; espoused to the Lord of Liancourt, and since Duchess of Beaufort. Henry IV. became violently in love with her during the civil wars; he went sometimes in a private dress to see her. One day he even disguised himself as a peasant, passed through the midst of the enemy's guards, and arrived at her house, not without some danger of being taken.

No lovers yet their sighing vows impart,
Though formed for love, yet generous was her heart.
Thus the fair beauties of the blushing rose
Coy in the spring to wanton zephyr close:
But the full lustre of their stores display
To the kind influence of a summer's day.
  Cupid, preparing to ensnare the maid,
Slyly approaches in disguise arrayed.
No dart, no torch his chubby hands employ,
In voice, and figure as an artless boy.
"From yonder stream to this enchanting dome
The hapless Mayenne's tremendous conqueror come."
Full through her soul the soft infection ran;
She feign would captivate the godlike man.
A livelier bloom her graceful features prove,
Which crowns the triumphs of applauding love.
What could he doubt? with charms celestial spread
The attractive virgin to the king he led.
With double glow each ornament of art
In nature's guise enslaves the enamored heart.
Her golden tresses floating in the air
Now kiss the rising bosom of the fair;
Now start to view the heavenly sweets displayed
By native innocence more lovely made.
No stern, no gloomy frown, which puts to flight
Each thought of love, of beauty, and delight;
But the mild softness of a decent shame
The cheek just tipping with the purest flame:
Commanding reverence, which excites desires,
And sheds when conquered love's increasing fires.
  Now the arch god with each enchanting grace
Diffused resistless beauties o'er the place.

The plenteous myrtle with spontaneous birth
Springs from the bosom of the liberal earth.
Its amorous foliage decorates the glade,
And woos the thoughtless to its fatal shade.
Till hands unseen the entangled step betray;
Fear bids depart, but pleasure bids them stay.
Soft through the shade a soothing Lethe rolls,
Where happy lovers with inebriate souls
Quaff long oblivion to departed fame;
So unresisted love's all-conquering flame!
How changed the scene! here every bosom glows;
Poured from each sweet the entrancing nectar flows.
Love sounds throughout: around, the feathered choir
Indulge the song and burn with mutual fire.
The hind arising ere the dawn of day
To Ceres' golden treasures bends his way;
Now stops aghast: now heaves the plaintive sighs,
And feels the new born passion with surprise.
No more his soul the toils of harvest move;
He dwells delighted on the scenes of love:
While heedless of her flock the maiden stands,
And drops the spindle from her faltering hands.
Could fair d'Estrées resist the magic charm?
What power can guard 'gainst love's prevailing arm.
Overcome by youth, a hero and the god
She yields her virgin bosom to their nod.
Meanwhile the king with dauntless soul prepares
In thought to mingle with the battle's cares.
Some subtle demon plies his secret art,
And free-born virtue sighing quits the heart.
To softer scenes his amorous soul betrayed
Sees, hears, and loves alone the heavenly maid.

But now the chieftains of the embattled band
With ardent vows their absent king demand;
They shuddered for his life, but little knew
Their fears were only to his glory due:
Immersed in grief the soldier's conquering pride
Sinks to despair, no Henry for their guide.
Thy guardian power, O France, no longer stays
To grant continuance of the soft delays:
At Louis' nod descending from the skies
Swift to the succor of his son he flies.
Alighting now o'er earth's extended round
He seeks a mind for wisdom's stores renowned,
Not where pale, hungry, speechless students claim
Fixed in a midnight gloom her sacred name,
But in fair Ivry, midst the din of arms,
Where the flushed warriors glow with conquest's charms.
At length the genius stays his ardent flight,
Where Calvin's floating banners spread to sight.
There Mornay he addressed; when reason leads,
Her solid influence consecrates our deeds.
As o'er the heathen world she poured her ray,
Whose virtues Christians blushing might survey,
Reason Aurelius' sentiments refined,
And showered ideas over Plato's mind.
Severe, but friendly Mornay knew the art
At once to mend, and captivate the heart.
His deeds more reverence than his doctrines move,
Each virtue met his fond, parental love.
Full steeled to pleasure, covetous of toils
He looked on dangers with undaunted smiles.
No poisonous frauds of palaces control
His nobly-stubborn purity of soul.

Thus Arethusa's genial waters flow
Soft to the bosom of the deep below,
A crystal pure, unconscious of a stain,
Spite of the billows of the foaming main.
The generous Mornay by the goddess led
Haste to the seats, where rapturous pleasure shed
Her soothing opiate on the victor's breast,
And lulled awhile the fates of France to rest.
Triumphant love each lavish charm employs
To blast his glory with redoubled joys.
A waste of transports fill the round of day,
Transports which fly too swiftly to decay.
To vengeance fired the little god descried
Mornay with heaven-born wisdom for his guide.
Full at the warrior-chief he points his dart
To lull his senses, and enthrall his heart.
Thick fall the blunted shafts, Mornay awaits
The king's return, and eyes the accursed retreats.
Fast by the stream, 'midst nature's rich perfume,
Sacred to silent ease where myrtles bloom,
D'Estrées on Henry lavished all her charms,
Melting he glowed, and languished in her arms.
No cooling change their blissful moments know,
Soft from their eyes the tears of rapture flow;
Tears, which redouble every fond delight,
And heavenly feelings of the soul excite;
Flushed with the full-blown rage of keen desires,
Which love alone can paint, for love alone inspires.
The wanton youth unfolds the hero's vest,
While smiling pleasures fan his soul to rest.
One holds the cuirass reeking from the plain,
One grasps the sword, yet never worn in vain;
And laughs, while poising in his hand he shows

The bulwark of the throne, and terror of its foes.
From Discord's voice the strains of insult roll,
Each cruel transport brooding in her soul,
With active fury at the favoring hour
To rouse the serpent of confederate power.
While Henry riots in the soft repose,
She wakes to vengeance his relentless foes.
Now in the fragrant gardens of delight
Mornay appears: he blushes at the sight
Their startled bosoms mutual fears engage,
And a dead silence chains the approaching sage.
But looks in silence bowed to earth impart
A powerful language to the sovereign's heart;
And sadness lowering in the clouded face
Proclaims at once his weakness, and disgrace.
Ill had another taken Mornay's care,
Love from the guilty few, accusers share.
"Fear not," he cries, "our anger; rest at ease;
Who points my error cannot fail to please:
Worthy of thee our bosom shall remain;
'Tis well: and Henry is himself again.
Love now resigns that virtue he betrayed:
Fly, let us quit this soft, inglorious shade.
Yes, quit the scenes, where my rebellious flame
Would fondling still the silken fetters frame.
Self-conquest surely boasts the noblest charms,
We'll brave the power of love in glory's arms;
Scatter destruction o'er the extended shore,
And sheathe our error in the Spaniard's gore."
These generous words the sage's soul inspire:
"Yes, now my sovereign beams with native fire.
Each rebel passion feels thy conquering reins,
O great protector of thy country's plains.

Love adds fresh lustre to the blaze of fame,
For triumphs there superior greatness claim."
He said; the monarch hastens to depart,
But oh! what sorrows load his amorous heart!
Still, as he flies, he cannot but adore,
His tears he censures, yet he weeps the more.
Forced by the sage, attracted by the fair,
He flies, returns, and quits her in despair.
D'Estrées unable to sustain the strife
Falls prostrate robbed of color, as of life.
A sudden night invades her beauteous eyes;
Love who perceived it, sent forth dreadful cries.
Pierced to the soul, lest death's eternal shade
Should rob his empire of the lovely maid:
Should spoil the lustre of so fair a frame,
Destined through France to spread the genial flame.
Wrapt in his arms, again her eyelids move,
And gently open to the voice of love.
The king she names, the king demands in vain,
Now looks, now closes her bright eyes again.
Love bathed in sorrow for the suffering fair
Recalled her sinking spirit by his prayer;
With flattering hopes her solaced soul betrayed,
And soothed those evils which himself had made.
Mornay of steady, and relentless mind,
Led on the monarch still but half resigned.
Firm force and godlike virtue point the way,
While glory's hands the laurel wreath display;
And love, indignant as the victor's fame,
Flies far from Anet to conceal his shame.

CANTO X.

The Argument.

The king returns to the army. Renews the siege. The duel between Turenne and d'Aumale. A famine in the city. The king relieves the inhabitants. Heaven at length recompenses his virtues. Truth descends to enlighten him. Paris opens her gates and the war is finished.

Those fatal moments lost in soft repose
Had waked the courage of the vanquished foes.
Rebellion breathed again, and faction's schemes
Flushed the deluded throng with golden dreams.
Yet vain their hopes, for full with generous fame
And active zeal the martial Bourbon came,
Eager to reap the harvest he had sown
And make the field of conquest all his own.
Again his banners waved aloft in air,
And Paris saw them with renewed despair.
Again the chief before her walls appears
Scarce yet recovered from a siege's fears;
Those very walls, where yet sulphurous smoke
With desolation marks the cannon's stroke,
Which now with ruins had bestrewed the land
Had not compassion checked the hero's hand;
When the bright angel, whose obedience still
Guardian of France, performs the Almighty's will,
Bade his soft breast with tender mercies glow,
Withheld his arm, and stopped the falling blow.
Through the king's camp no voice was heard around

But songs of mirth, and joy's tumultuous sound.
While each brave warrior, anxious for the fray,
With eyes impatient marks the destined prey.
Meantime the haughty legions all dismayed,
Pressed round their prudent chief, and sued for aid;
When thus d'Aumale, of brave impetuous soul,
Abhorring counsel, and above control;
"We have not yet so learned our warfare here
To sneak to hiding-holes, and crouch for fear,
Cursed be the man whose counsel thither tends;
The foe comes forward—let us meet them, friends.
Not tamely wait till other vantage calls,
And rust in sloth beneath these coward walls;
On then, and conquer—fortune oft will spare
A smile to crown the efforts of despair.
Frenchmen attacked, already are o'erthrown—
Seek then your safety from yourselves alone.
Ye chiefs, who hear me, haste where glory calls,
Know, soldiers, know your leaders are your walls."
He spoke—amazed the Leaguers heard each sound,
And turned their eyes in silence to the ground.
He blushed with shame, and in each leader's face
Read their refusal, and his own disgrace.
"Ye will not follow then, ye heroes tame,
Nor wish I basely to survive the shame;
Well—shrink at dangers still—so shall not I —
Alone I go—to conquer or to die."
He spoke; and from the city gate in martial pride
Boldly advanced with firm impetuous stride.
Before his steps the shrill-tongued herald went,
To hurl defiance at each warrior's tent.
E'en to the king's abode the herald came,

And challenged combat in the hero's name.
"Ye daring sons of glory," loud he cried,
"Now be your valor with your fortune tried,
D'Aumale in single combat waits you here,
By me he calls to arms—stand forth, appear."
The valiant chiefs the desperate challenge heard,
Their zeal rekindling at each haughty word,
Each warrior stern, impatient for the fray,
Hoped the king's voice, and hailed the glorious day.
Courage in all had formed an equal right.
Turenne alone found favor in his sight.
"Go," said the prince, "chastise the daring foe,
France to thy hands shall all her glory owe;
Remember, soldier, 'tis a glorious cause,
Thy own, thy king's, thy country, and thy laws:
I'll arm thee for the fight"—the monarch said,
And from his girdle loosed the shining blade.
When thus Turenne—"By this good sword I swear,
By thee, my king, each subject's darling care,
Thus nobly honored in my prince's voice,
My ready zeal shall never shame thy choice."
He spoke; while manly valor flushed his face,
And his heart sprung to meet the king's embrace;
Then to the field, impetuous as a flood,
Rushed where d'Aumale the daring champion stood.
To Paris' walls ran all the Leaguer-bands,
While round their king his faithful army stands.
With steadfast eye, which anxious care revealed,
Each side beheld their champion take the field.
While voice and gesture on each part unite
To warm each hero for the dreadful fight.
Meantime a cloud the vaulted sky deforms,
Pregnant it seemed with more than common storms,

While from its womb of darkness, strange to tell,
Burst forth in flames the monstrous brood of hell.
There was hot Zeal, which frantic leaps all bounds,
And Discord smiling on her thousand wounds,
There artful Policy designing fly,
With heart of falsehood and with scowling eye;
There the mad demon too of battles stood,
All Leaguer-gods and drunk with human blood.
Hither they haste, and land on Paris' walls,
D'Aumale, their League, the cause, their interest calls.

When lo! an angel from the azure sky,
The faithful servant of the God on high,
Descended—round his head in splendor play
Beams that eclipse the lustre of the day.
On wings of fire he shaped his cheerful flight,
And marked his passage with a train of light.
A fruitful olive-branch one hand sustained,
Presage of happy days and peace regained.
His other hand upheld a flaming sword,
And shook the terrors of the eternal Lord;
That sword with which the avenging angel armed
Smote the first-born—confounded and disarmed
Aghast at once shrank all the fiends of hell,
While to the ground their pointless weapons fell.
And resolution sickened all o'erthrown
By some resistless force from hands unknown.
So Dagon worshipped on Philistia's shore,
Whose purple altars ran with human gore;
Before the ark with tottering ruin nods,
And the fallen idol owns the God of Gods.

Paris, the king, the army, heaven, and hell
Witnessed the combat—at the trumpets' swell

On to the field the ready warriors came,
Conscious of valor, and a thirst for fame.
Their hands unused the cumbrous weight to wield,
Disdained to fight beneath the glittering shield,
The specious armor of inglorious knight
Proof 'gainst all blows, and dazzling to the sight;
They scorned the equipment of such coward dress,
Which lengthening combat, made all danger less.
In courage firm advanced each haughty lord,
Man against man, and sword opposed to sword.
"O God of kings," the royal champion cried,
"Judge thou my cause, and combat on my side;
Courage I vaunt not of, an idle name,
When heavenly justice bars the warrior's claim;
Not from myself, I dare the glorious fight,
My God shall arm me who approves my right."
To whom d'Aumale, "In deeds of valor known
Be my reliance on this arm alone.
Our fate depends on us, the mind afraid
Prays to his God in vain for needful aid.
Calm in the heavens He views our equal fight,
And smiling conquest proves the hero's right.
"The god of wars is valor"—stern he cried,
And with a look of fell contemptuous pride
Gazed on his rival, whose firm modest mind
Spoke in his face, courageous and resigned.
Now sounds the trumpet, to the dubious fray
Rush the brave chiefs impatient of delay.
Whate'er of skill, whate'er of strength is known,
By turns each daring champion proves his own.
While all around the troops with anxious sight,
Half pleased, half frighted, view the desperate fight.
The flashing swords cast forth promiscuous rays,

Blinding the eye-sight with their trembling blaze,
As when the sun athwart the silver streams
Darts his strong light, and breaks in quivering beams.
The thronging crowds around with eyes intent
Look on amazed, and wait the dread event.
With nervous strength and fury uncontrolled,
Full of himself, and as a lion bold
Seems stern d'Aumale; the whiles his rival brave,
Nor proud of strength, nor passion's headlong slave,
Collected in himself awaits his foe,
Smiles at his rage, and wards each furious blow.
In vain d'Aumale his utmost efforts tries,
His arm no more its wonted strength supplies,
While cool Turenne the combat's rage renews,
Attacks with vigor, and with skill pursues,
Till proud d'Aumale sinks baffled to the ground,
And his hot blood flows reeking from the wound;
The champion falls; hell echoes with despair,
And dreadful sounds affright the troubled air.
"League, thou art all o'erthrown, the prize is won,
Bourbon, thou hast it now—our reign is done."
The wretched people with lamenting cries
Attest their grief, and rend the vaulted skies;
D'Aumale all weak, and stretched upon the sand,
His glittering sword fallen useless from his hand,
Fainting, yet strives fresh vigor to regain,
And seems to threaten still, though all in vain.
Fain would he speak, while deep-drawn laboring breath
Denies him utterance in the pangs of death.
Shame's quickening sense augments his furious air,
And his red eyeballs flash extreme despair.

He heaves, he sinks, he struggles all in vain,
His loosened limbs fall lifeless on the plain;
To Paris' walls he lifts his closing eye,
Then dies indignant with a desperate sigh.
Mayenne, thou sawest him die, and at each look
Thy trembling nerves with shuddering horrors shook,
Then to thy mind thy own approaching fall
Came full, and thou wast conquered with d'Aumale.
The soldiers now to Paris' gates repair,
And with slow steps their breathless hero bear.
Entranced with woe, all silent, and amazed
Upon the bleeding corpse the people gazed,
That deep-gashed wound, that front with gore bespread,
That mouth now fallen, and that unpropped head.
Those eyes which e'en in death tremendous stare,
While the fixed sight cast forth a livid glare,
They saw—compassion, shame, disgrace and fear
Choked up each cry, and dried the falling tear.
'Twas solemn stillness all. When lo, a sound
Which teemed with horror pierced the welkin round.
For now the assailants with tumultuous cries
Demand the attack, and hope the promised prize.
Meantime the king, whom milder thoughts engage,
Calmed their high transports, and repressed their rage.
Stubborn howe'er, and adverse to his will,
Howe'er ungrateful, 'twas his country still;
Hated by subjects whom he wished to save,
The mercies they denied, his virtue gave;
Pleased if his bounty could their crimes efface,
And force the wretched to accept of grace.

All desperate means he shuddered to employ,
He sought to conquer Paris, not destroy,
Famine perhaps, and lengthened scenes of woe
Might bend to law a proud mistaken foe;
Brought up in plenty, with abundance fed,
To ease and all the train of pleasures bred;
His people pressed by want's impulsive sting
Might seek for mercy from their patriot king.
Rebellion's sons, whom vengeance fain would spare,
Mistook for weakness Henry's pious care.
His valor all forgot, in stubborn pride
They braved their master, and the king defied.
But when no more along the silver Seine
The freighted vessels bear the golden grain,
When desperate famine with her meagre train
With death her consort spreads her baneful reign,
In vain the wretch sends forth his piteous cries,
Looks up in vain for food and gasping dies.
The rich no more preserve their wasting health,
But pine with hunger in the midst of wealth.
No sound of joy the afflicted city knows,
No sound, but such as witnessed direful woes.
No more their heads with festive chaplets crowned,
In songs of joy they send the goblet round.
No wines provoke excess, no savory meats
Quicken the jaded appetite. Through the lone streets,
Emaciate, pale, with dead dull ghastly glare
They wander victims of the fiend Despair.
The weak old man worn out with hunger's rage
Sees his child perish in its cradled age;
Here drops a family entire, and there

Grovelling in dust, and worn with meagre care,
The haggard wretches in life's latest stage
Fight for an offal with relentless rage.
Fain would the living prey upon the dead,
While the dry bones are kneaded into bread.
What will not misery do? This cursed repast
Promotes the work of death, and proves their last.
Meantime the priests, those reverend sons of prayer
Who preach up fasting which they never share,
Battened in plenty, deaf to hunger's cries,
Which from their bounty met no wished supplies:
Yet went they forth with true fanatic zeal
To preach those virtues which they could not feel.
To the poor wretch, death hanging on his eyes,
Their liberal hand would ope the friendly skies;
To some they talked of vengeance sent from God,
And Henry punished with the Almighty's rod;
Of Paris saved by heaven's immediate love,
And manna dropping from the clouds above;
O'erawed by power, by artful priests deceived,
The crowd obsequious what they taught believed;
Submissive, half content, resigned their breath,
Nay, happy too, they triumphed in their death.
With foreign troops, to swell affliction's tide
The famished city swarmed on every side;
Their breasts where pity never learned to glow
Lusted for rapine, and rejoiced in woe.
These came from haughty Belgia's plains, and those
Helvetia's monsters, hireling friends or foes.
To mercy deaf, on misery's sons they press
And snatch the little from extreme distress.
Not for the soldier's plunder, hidden store,

And heaped up riches, useful now no more;
Not urged by lust, and lured by beauty's charms,
To force the virgin from her mother's arms;
Their murderous torments raged for food concealed
Supports laid up, and pittance unrevealed.
A woman—God! must faithful memory tell
A deed which bears the horrid stamp of hell!
Their flinty hearts which never felt remorse
Robbed of her little all with brutal force.
One tender infant left, her late fond care
The frantic mother eyed with wild despair.
Then furious all at once, with murderous blade
Rushed where the dear devoted offspring played;
The smiling babe stretched forth its little arms;
Its helpless age, sweet looks, and guileless charms
Spoke daggers to her, whilst her bosom burns
With maddening rage, remorse, and love by turns.
Fain would she backward turn, and strives to shun
The wretched deed which famine wishes done.
Thrice did she raise the sword, and all dismayed
Thrice did she trembling drop the bloodless blade.
Till furious grown in hollow voice she cries:
"Cursed be the fruitful bed, and nuptial ties,
And thou unhappy offspring of my womb,
Brought into being to receive thy doom,
Didst thou accept this idle boon of life
To die by famine, or the tyrant's strife?
Shouldst thou escape their unrelenting rage
Will pinching hunger spare thy softer age?
Then wherefore shouldst thou live? to weep in vain
A wretched wanderer o'er thy parent slain.
No, die with me, ere keen reflection knows
With bitter anguish to augment thy woes.

Give me—thou shalt—nor wait the formal grave,
Give back the blood thy helpless mother gave.
I will entomb thee, and the world shall see
A desperate crime unheard of yet in me."
She stopped, and frantic with extreme despair
Plunged the keen poniard in her darling heir.
Hither by hunger drawn, the ruffians sped
While yet the mother on her infant fed.
Their eyes with eager joy the place survey
Like savage tigers gloating on their prey.
With furious wish they scan the mansion o'er,
Then rush in rage and burst the jarring door.
When, dreadful sight! a form with horror wild,
That seemed a woman, o'er a murdered child
Set all aghast, and in his reeking blood
Bathed her fell hands, and sought a present food.
"Yes," cried the wretch, "the bloody deed is done,
Look there, inhuman monsters—'tis my son.
These hands had never worn this purple hue,
Nor this dear offspring perished but for you.
Now, ruffians, now with happy transport strike,
Feed on the mother and the babe alike.
Why heaves your breast with such unusual awe?
Have I alone offended nature's law?
Why stare you all on me? such horrid food
Befits ye best, ye lustful sons of blood."
Furious she spoke, and staring, desperate wild,
Plunged home the sword, and died upon her child.
The dreadful sight all power of speech controls,
And harrows up e'en these barbarian souls.
In dire amaze they cast their eyes around,
And fear an angry God in every sound;
While the whole city, at the scene dismayed,

Called loud for death, the wretches' last kind aid.
E'en to the king the dreadful rumor ran,
His bowels yearned—he felt himself a man.
At each recital tender passions rose,
And tearful mercy wept a nation's woes.
"O God," he cried, "to whom my thoughts are bare,
Who knowest all I can, and all I dare,
To Thee I lift these hands unstained with blood,
Thou knowest I war not 'gainst my country's good.
To me impute not nor their crimes nor woes,
Let Mayenne say, from whence the ruin flows.
For all these ills let him advance the plea,
Which tyrants only use, necessity;
To be thy country's foe, Mayenne, be thine,
To be its father, be that duty mine.
I am their father, and would wish to spare
Rebellious children with a father's care.
Should my compassion then but madly arm
A desperate rebel to extend his harm?
Or must I lose my regal crown to show
Indulgent mercy on a subject foe?
Yes—let him live, and if such mercy cost
So dear a price as all my kingdoms lost,
Let this memorial dignify my grave,
To rule o'er foes I sought not, but to save."
He spoke, and bade the storms of vengeance cease,
And hushed the tumults with returning peace.
Paris again her cheerful accents heard,
And willing troops obeyed their Henry's word.
Now on the walls the throng impetuous swarms,
And all around, pale, trembling, wasted forms,
Stalk like the ghosts, which from the shades of night,

Compelled by magic force, revisit light,
When potent magi with enchantments fell
Invoke the powers below, and startle hell.
What admiration swelled each happy breast
To find a guardian in their foe professed!
By their own chiefs deserted and betrayed,
An adverse army lent a willing aid.
These pikes, which late dealt slaughter all around,
With desperate force no longer reared to wound,
Now kindly raised to second Henry's care,
On their stained points the cheering nurture bear.
"Are these," said they, "the monsters of mankind?
Are these the workings of a tyrant mind?
This the proud king, sad outcast of his God,
His passions' easy slave, and people's rod?
No, 'tis the image of that power above,
Who acts with justice, and delights in love;
He triumphs, yet forgives, nor seeks to show
Revenge's malice on a conquered foe.
Nay more, he comforts, and with royal grace
Extends assistance to a rebel race.
Be Discord banished from this glorious hour,
And our blood flow but to cement his power;
And steady zeal, no longer faction's slave,
For him employ that life he wished to save."
Such was the language Paris' sons expressed,
While soft emotions filled each grateful breast.
But who alas! can strong assurance ground
On sickly friendship, which exhales in sound?
What hopes from such a race so light and vain,
Who only idly rise to fall again?
For now the priests, whose cursed designing arts
Had raised the flames of discord in their hearts,

Flocked round the people—"O ye sons of shame,
Cowards in war, and Christians but in name,
Is't thus your weakness from your God would fly,
Think on the martyrs and resolve to die;
Think on the paths their holy army trod,
Nor for preserving life, offend your God.
Think of the crown religion's sure to bring,
Nor wait for pardon from a tyrant king.
Fain would he lead your steady faith astray,
And warp your conscience to his dangerous way.
With zeal defend religion's holy laws,
Death has no terrors in a Christian cause."
So spake they vengeful, and with purpose dire
Blackened the king, till fell rebellion's fire
Flamed out afresh, and full of desperate strife
They scorn to own the debt of forfeit life.
Midst all these clamors Henry's virtue known
Pierced through the skies to God's eternal throne.
Louis, from whom the Bourbon race begun,
Saw now the roll of time completely done,
When his son's error should be purged away,
And pure religion beam her certain ray.
Then from his breast fled all the train of fears,
And faith established dried up all his tears.
Then soothing hope, and fond paternal love,
Proved his sure guides to heavenly paths above.
Before all time, in pure effulgence bright,
The God of gods had placed His throne of light;
Heaven is beneath His feet; power, wisdom, love,
Compose His essence; while the saints above,
Triumphant hosts, partake unfading joys,
Which neither grief disturbs, nor time destroys.
He speaks, the earth is changed, and frail mankind,

The sport of error, and in councils blind,
Events perceived, but causes undescried,
Accuse God's wisdom in their selfish pride.
Such were the Goths of old, and barbarous Huns,
The numerous Turk, and Afric's tawny sons.
All nations have their mighty tyrant, all
Rise in their turns, and hasten to their fall.
Yet not forever tyrants sway their land,
Oft falls the sceptre in more favored hands,
And heaven's vicegerents, in their actions known,
Dispense God's favors from a royal throne.

Now Louis, fire of Bourbon's glorious race,
In plaintive words addressed the throne of grace.
"Lord of the world, if from these azure skies
Thou lookest on mortals with considering eyes,
See how rebellion's hateful treason stains
The generous sons on famed Lutetia's plains.
If all unmindful of a subject's awe,
They spurn their king, nor heed the royal law,
'Tis for Thy faith their ardent bosoms feel,
And disobedience springs from holy zeal.
Behold the king, of tried illustrious worth,
The terror, love, example of the earth,
With so much virtues couldst Thou form his mind,
To leave him pathless, and in errors blind?
Must Thy most perfect work forego all bliss,
And only Henry thank his God amiss?
Let him henceforth mistaken notions shun,
Give France a master and the Church a son.
The ready subjects to their monarch bring
And to his subjects restore the king.
So in Thy praise may all our hearts unite,
And a whole city worship God aright."

His humble prayers the eternal Maker heard,
And spoke assent; earth trembled at His word:
The Leaguers stood amazed, and Henry's breast
Glowed with that faith which God Himself impressed.
When from her mansion, near the eternal throne,
Truth dear to mortals, though sometimes unknown,
Descends a veil of clouds, with ample shade
Concealed from mortal ken the lovely maid,
Till by degrees, as at the approach of day,
The shadowy mist melts all dissolved away:
Full to the sight now all the goddess shone,
Clear as heaven's light, and cheerful as the sun.
Henry, whose bosom from his early youth
Had felt the longing of eternal truth,
With faith avowed, and pure religion glows,
Which baffles man, and reason darkly knows;
With will convinced reveres the holy see,
Which always one, howe'er dispersed and free;
Beneath one chief adores in every place,
In all her happy saints, God's wondrous grace.
Christ, for our sins who shed His purest blood,
Now for His chosen flock, the living food,
To the king's self who bows with secret dread,
Shows his true godhead in the hallowed bread;
The monarch, deep impressed with holy awe,
Adores the wonders of the sacred law.
Now sainted Louis, at the Lord's command,
The peaceful olive waving in his hand,
Came down from heaven; a ready guide to bring
To Paris' opening walls their convert king.
In God's own name, by whom all monarchs reign,
He entered Paris; while the Leaguer train

Bow submissive; e'en the meddling priests
Are dumb, and all around with jocund feasts
And cries of joy the vaulted heavens ring,
And hail at once a conquerer, father, king.
Henceforth all nations owned his regal state,
Too soon determined, as begun too late.
The Austrian trembled; and by Rome approved,
In Henry's virtues was his Rome beloved.
Discord was exiled from Lutetia's shore,
And Mayenne brave, a rebel now no more,
Himself his province, in subjection brings,
The best of subjects to the best of kings.

END OF THE HENRIADE.

LETTERS.

LETTERS.

[The formal and familiar letters of Voltaire exhibit the graces of style which characterize the most versatile as also the most lucid of French writers. Some of the subtler nuances of expression elude the best translators, through the more rigid forms of the English language. The selected letters here given are from Smollett, Franklin, Parton, and our editorial staff. They reflect the play of the ever-alert mind and catch the happy turns of wit and pithy expression that brighten every page of the records of Voltaire's life-long intercourse with his multitude of friends, from humble dependents to personages of state who sought the honor of his acquaintance.]

THE PRINCE ROYAL OF PRUSSIA TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

AUGUST 8, 1736.

Sir.—Though I have not the honor of being personally acquainted with you, I have long known you in your works. They are treasures of genius, if I may be allowed the expression, pieces wrought with so much taste, that we discover new beauties in them at every reading. I think I have discovered in them the character of their ingenious author, who does an honor to our age and to human nature. The great men among the moderns will one day be obliged to you, and to you alone, for turning the balance in their favor, in case the controversy

concerning the preference due to the ancients or moderns should be revived.

To the quality of excellent poet, you add many different sorts of knowledge, which, though they have some affinity with poetry, were never superadded to it but by your pen. No poet before you could give cadence to metaphysical thoughts; this honor was reserved to you. It is the taste for philosophy that you display in your works which has made me send you my translation of "The Accusation and Defence of Wolfius," the most celebrated philosopher of our age, who, for having diffused light over the darkest parts of metaphysics, and treated the most abstruse points in a manner equally sublime, elegant, and exact, has been cruelly accused of irreligion and atheism. Such is the fate of great men; they are constantly exposed by their superior genius to the envenomed darts of calumny and envy.

I have caused the same author's treatise upon "God, the Soul, and the World" to be translated. I shall send it to you, sir, as soon as ever it is finished; and I am sure that you will be struck with the force of evidence in all its propositions; they follow geometrically, and are connected together like the links of a chain.

The tenderness which you show for all those who devote themselves to the arts and sciences makes me hope that you will not exclude me from the number of those whom you think worthy of your instruction. I consider your literary correspondence as a source of information that must be profitable to every thinking being. I might even venture

to affirm that in the whole world there are none that would not be benefited by becoming your scholars. Without lavishing an incense unworthy to be offered you, I can say with the utmost sincerity that I discover innumerable beauties in your works. Your "Henriade" charms me; it triumphs over the injudicious criticism launched against it. The tragedy of "Cæsar" presents us with characters admirably supported. The sentiments in it are all noble and grand, and it is easy to perceive that Brutus is either a Roman, or an Englishman; Alzira adds to the graces of novelty, the happy contrast between the manners of the savage Americans and the Europeans. You show, in the character of Gusman, that Christianity, misunderstood and directed by false zeal, makes men more barbarous and cruel than Paganism itself.

Corneille, the great Corneille, the wonder of his age, if he were revived in our days, would see with astonishment, and perhaps with envy, that the tragic muse has lavished upon you those graces of which she was so sparing to him. What may not be expected from the author of so many masterly compositions? What new wonders may not come from the pen of him who delineated, in so lively and admirable a manner, "The Temple of Taste"?

This is what has made me so ardently desire to be possessed of all your works. I beg, sir, you would be so good as to send them to me, and communicate them all without reserve. If, among your manuscripts, there should be any which a necessary circumspection should induce you to conceal from the public, I promise to make it a profound secret,

and content myself with admiring it in private. I am not ignorant that the faith of princes is not thought very respectable in these days; but I hope you will not let yourself be prepossessed by vulgar prejudices, and that you will make an exception in my favor.

I shall think myself more rich in possessing your works than I could ever be made by all the transitory favors of fortune, of which we are deprived by the same chance that bestows them on us. The first—I mean your works—we may make our own by the assistance of memory, and they last as long as our memory lasts. As I know the weakness of mine, I hesitate a long time upon the choice of things worthy to be deposited in it.

If poetry were still upon the same footing as formerly, that is to say, if poets were capable only of composing insipid idylliums, eclogues eternally written upon the same plan, trifling stanzas, or elegiac strains, I should renounce the art forever; but you ennoble it, you point out new paths, paths unknown to . . . . and to . . . . Your poetry has qualities which make it respectable, and worthy to be the study and admiration of all men of taste: they comprise a complete course of morality, by which men are taught both to act and to think; virtue is therein painted in its most beautiful colors: the idea of true glory is ascertained, and inspires us with the love of virtue in a manner so delicate, that whoever has read your works is fired with an ambition to tread in your footsteps. How many times have I said to myself: "Wretch, lay down a burden which thou art unable to bear; no

man can imitate Voltaire without having abilities equal to his." In those moments I perceived that the advantages of birth are of no consequence; they are distinctions foreign to ourselves, and adorn only the outside. How much preferable to them are the talents of the mind! How much are we indebted to those whom nature has endowed with extraordinary qualifications! She takes pleasure in giving to some men all the capacity necessary to make progress in the sciences, and it is the duty of princes to reward their labors. Why does not glory make choice of me to crown your success? I should fear nothing but that the country here should not produce as many laurels as your works deserve. If fate does not favor me so far as to make me constantly happy in your company, I at least hope one day to see him whom I admire at a distance, and to assure you in person that I am, with all the esteem due to those who, following the light of truth, consecrate their works to the good of the public,

Your affectionate friend,

FREDERICK,

Prince Royal of Prussia.

M. DE VOLTAIRE'S ANSWER TO THE PRINCE ROYAL OF PRUSSIA.

PARIS, August 26, 1736.

Sir: I must be insensible if I was not highly pleased with the letter with which your royal highness honored me; my self-love received high satisfaction from it; but the love of humankind,

which always animated my heart, and which I will presume to say is my distinguishing characteristic, gave me a much purer delight when I saw that there is in the world a prince who thinks like a man, a philosophical prince born to make the human species happy.

Give me leave to tell you, that there is not a man living, who is not in duty bound to thank you for the care you take to improve by sound philosophy a soul by nature framed for government. Depend upon it, there never were any kings who really deserved the name of good, but those who, like you, began by endeavoring to acquire knowledge, to study human nature, to love truth, and to detest persecution and superstition. Any prince who thinks in this manner, may revive the golden age in his dominions. Why do so few kings seek such happiness? Your royal highness must be sensible that it is because most of them think more of royalty than of humanity; you observe the very reverse of this conduct. Depend upon it, if the hurry of business and the malice of men do not spoil so fine a character, you will be one day adored by your people, and beloved by the whole world; all those who deserve the name of philosophers will repair to your dominions; and as celebrated artists crowd to countries where their respective arts are encouraged, your throne will be surrounded by men who think.

The renowned Queen Christina quitted her dominions, in order to go in quest of the arts. Reign, my lord, and let the arts come in quest of you.

May you never be disgusted with the sciences on

account of the dissensions of learned men. You see, my lord, by what you have yourself informed me, that the learned are only men like courtiers themselves; they are sometimes as rapacious, as much addicted to intrigue; and all the difference between the plagues of the court and the plagues of the school, is, that the latter are more ridiculous. It is afflicting to humanity that those who call themselves the publishers of the divine commandments, the interpreters of the deity, in a word, the divines, should be more dangerous than all the rest; that some of them should be as troublesome to society, as confused in their ideas; and their souls are swelled with gall and pride, in proportion as they are void of ideas. Such men would disturb the peace of the whole earth for the sake of a sophism, and engage kings to assert, by sword and fire, the honor of an argument, in ferio or in barbara. Every thinking being who differs from them in opinion is branded as an atheist; and every king who does not favor their party is consigned to damnation. You are well aware, my lord, that the best way is to leave these pretended preceptors and real enemies of society to themselves. Their words, when overlooked and neglected, mix with the air like wind; but, if authority adds its weight to them, that wind acquires a strength which is sometimes able to shake the throne.

I see, my lord, with the joy of a heart inspired by zeal for the welfare of mankind, the great difference you make between those who peaceably investigate the truth, and those who war for words they do not understand. I perceive that the New-

tons, the Leibnitzes, the Bayles, and the Lockes, those souls so sublime and so humane, give yours its spiritual nourishment, and that you reject the pretended ailments of the others, which you would find poisoned, and void of substance.

I can not make sufficient acknowledgments to your highness for having sent me the little book concerning Mr. Wolf; his metaphysical ideas reflect an honor on the human understanding; they resemble flashes of lightning in the darkest night; nothing further can, in my opinion, be expected from metaphysics. It does not seem probable that the first principles of things will ever be thoroughly understood. The rats, who occupy a few holes in a great building, know not whether the building is eternal; who is the architect, nor why that architect has built; they exert themselves to the utmost to preserve their lives, to people their holes, and to evade the destructive animals who pursue them. We are the rats, and the divine architect who built this edifice of the universe has not, as I know, hitherto disclosed his scent to any of us. If any man may flatter himself with having guessed right, it is Mr. Wolf. Though we may sometimes combat his opinions, we must always esteem him: his philosophy is by no means pernicious. What can be more beautiful and more true than his axiom, that men ought to be just, even if they had the misfortune of being atheists?

You were so good, my lord, as to promise to send me "The Treatise On God, the Soul and the World." What a present this! How extraordinary a commerce! The heir to a monarchy, in his

palace, condescends to send instructions to a recluse! My lord, deign to make me this present; my great love for the truth renders me worthy of it; most princes fear to hear the truth, you undertake to teach it. With regard to the verses which you mention, you think as judiciously upon that as upon every other article; such verses as do not teach men new and interesting truths do not deserve to be read; you are sensible that nothing can be more contemptible than to pass away one's life in reducing to rhyme such trite, commonplace topics as do not deserve the name of thoughts. If anything can be lower than this, it is to be a satirist alone, and to write only in order to depreciate others. Such poets are in Parnassus what those doctors are in the schools who know nothing but words, and cabal against those who are acquainted with things.

If your royal highness has not been displeased with the "Henriade," I should thank that love of truth, that horror of faction, persecution, superstition, tyrants and rebels, which breathe through my poem. It is the work of a virtuous man, and should of consequence meet with a favorable reception from a philosophical prince.

You command me to send you my other works. I shall obey you, my lord: I shall submit them to your judgment; you will to me supply the place of the public. I will submit to you whatever I have advanced in philosophy; your information shall be my recompense; it is a recompense which few sovereigns have to give. I may depend upon

your secrecy; your virtue must equal your knowledge.

I should look upon it as a singular happiness to have it in my power to come and pay my court to your royal highness. Travellers go to Rome to see churches, pictures, and bas relievos. Such a prince as you is much more deserving of a traveller's attention; a prince of such merit is a much more uncommon sight. But friendship, which detains me in my present retreat, will not permit me to quit it. You appear to me to be more a man than a prince, and you will, without doubt, permit me, my lord, to prefer my friends even to kings.

In whatever corner of the world I end my life, be assured, my lord, I will always offer up my best wishes for you, that is, for the happiness of a whole nation. My soul will be always in the number of your subjects; your glory will be always dear to me. It shall be my constant prayer that you may always be like yourself, and that other kings may be like you. I am, with the profoundest respect,

Your royal highness's humble servant,

VOLTAIRE.

TO THE PRINCE ROYAL OF PRUSSIA.

CIREY, December 21, 1741.

Sun who in winter sad darts feeble fire,
Sun who art of this world believed the fire,
Inventor deemed of the poetic trade,
Though such sad verses every day are made:
Say, Sun, what rigorous destiny ordains,
That whilst so little of the year remains

You should so distant from famed Berlin roll,
Which lies toward the frozen northern pole?
There dwells the chief whose breast celestial fire,
In his climes wanting, ever does inspire;
The hero who a host undaunted led,
And conquered Neisse when from our climes you fled.
Your course why do you to the Antarctic steer?
Do negroes lovely to your eyes appear?
From that sad climate quickly back retire,
And like my hero yield celestial fire.

In terms like these, royal Sir, did I this morning address your brother, the sun, who is likewise the soul of a part of this world. I should have said a great deal more concerning your majesty if I had that talent for writing verse with ease, which I have lost, and which you possess. I have received some here which you composed at Neisse, with as much ease as you took the town. This little anecdote, together with the verses, which you were so kind as to send me immediately after the victory of Molwitz, will one day furnish extraordinary materials for history.

Louis XIV. took Franche-Comté in winter, but he fought no battle and composed no verses at the camp before Dole or Besançon. Those composed by your majesty at Neisse, resemble those which Solomon composed in all his glory, when, after having known all things by experience, he acknowledged that "all is vanity." It is true, the good man spoke thus in the midst of three hundred wives, and seven hundred concubines, and without having ever fought a battle or besieged a town. But, royal Sir, no offence to Solomon or you, or to

you and Solomon; there is certainly some reality in this world.

Silesia's regions to lay waste,
Then crowned with laurels home to haste,
To hear all bards your worth proclaim,
And consecrate the hero's fame;
The fair and brave each night to call
To opera, comedy, or ball;
Yourself to see both loved and feared,
Admired by all men, and revered,
Seated on glory's lap to know
The pleasures that from friendship flow;
A joy to those but rarely known
Who shine in fields or on the throne;
With taste to read the learned lays
Composed by bards of ancient days;
Sometimes to labor happy rhymes,
Which shall be read in latest times;
Such a life must your bliss secure,
And pleasure must be real, sure.

Your majesty has achieved many great things in a short time. I am positive there is not that person living who is employed in a greater variety of affairs; but with this active genius that comprehends so many things in its sphere, you will always preserve that superiority of genius which raises you above all your employments.

All I apprehend is, that you may at last conceive too great a contempt for mankind. Millions of animals with two feet and no feathers are removed to a vast distance from you, as well by the meanness of their understanding as of their condition. This thought has been beautifully expressed by Milton: "Amongst unequals no society."

There is another misfortune to be dreaded, and that is that, as your majesty so admirably delineates the noble courage of politicians, the interested attachment of courtiers, etc., you may at last distrust all demonstrations of affection whatever, and look upon it as a self-evident proposition that no king is loved for his own sake. Let me in my turn, Sir, offer an argument of my own. Is it not true that no man can avoid loving, for his own sake, a person of a superior genius, who has a variety of talents, and to those talents joins the art of pleasing? Now if by ill luck this superior genius should happen to be a king, should his condition for that reason be the worse, and would he be the less beloved because of his wearing a crown? For my part, I do not find that the last circumstance inspires me with any coldness.

I am, Sir, etc.,

THE PRINCE ROYAL OF PRUSSIA TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

SELOWITZ, March 23, 1742.

Dear Voltaire: I am afraid to write to you, for I have no other news to tell you but such as you are quite indifferent about, or such as you abhor. If I were to tell you, for example, that the inhabitants of two different countries of Germany left their habitations in order to cut the throats of another people, of whose very name they were ignorant, and of whom they went in quest to a very remote country, and for no other reason than because their master had made an agreement with

another prince, and because they intended to join in order to cut the throat of a third, you would tell me that such people were fools and mad to second in that manner the caprice and barbarity of their master.

Were I to tell you that we are preparing, with great care and expense, to demolish certain walls raised at an immense outlay; that we reap where we have not sown, and are masters where no body is strong enough to resist us; you would cry out: "O barbarians, robbers, inhuman wretches! the unjust shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven," according to St. Matthew, xii:24.

Since I foresee what you would say to me upon these subjects, I shall talk to you no more about them; I shall content myself with informing you that a man whom you have heard spoken of under the name of the King of Prussia, hearing that the dominions of his ally the Emperor were ruined by the Queen of Hungary, flew to his assistance; that he joined his troops to those of the King of Poland, in order to make a diversion in Lower Austria; and that he has been so successful that he expects in a short time to engage the principal forces of the Queen of Hungary in order to serve his ally. This is generosity, you will say; this is heroism. Yet, dear Voltaire, this is exactly the same with the first picture; it may be compared to the same woman appearing in her night-cap when she divests herself of her charms, and afterward showing herself with her paint, her false teeth, and her trinkets. In how many different points of view may the same object be seen? How much do men's judgments vary!

Men condemn in the evening what they approved in the morning; the sun which pleased them at its rising displeases them when it sets; hence it is that reputations are established, that they sink, and that they are re-established; and yet we are weak enough to be solicitous about reputation during the whole course of our lives. How is it possible that men can be imposed upon by this false coin ever since it was first current? Etc.

THE KING OF PRUSSIA TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

If all histories were written like that which you sent me, we would be better acquainted with the manners of all ages, and less imposed upon by historians. The longer I know you, the more I admire your abilities. No style can, in my opinion, be finer than that in which the History of Louis XIV. is written. I read every paragraph three or four times over, to such a degree do I admire it; every sentence is striking, it everywhere abounds with admirable reflections; there is not a false thought in it; there is nothing in it in anyway puerile and its impartiality is unexceptionable. When I have read the work through, I shall send you a few remarks upon it, among the rest, upon the German names which you have a little disfigured. This might render the work somewhat obscure, as some of them are so disguised that we are puzzled to guess at them.

I wish every work capable of conveying instruc-

tion was to come from your pen. We should then be sure of being improved by the books we read.

TO CARDINAL QUIRINI.

BERLIN, December 12, 1751.

The temple would you have me sing,
To which you various offerings bring?
But yet though I your worth admire,
I cannot do what you require.
How can I, on the banks of Spree,
Where Roman laws no more bear sway,
My voice before all mankind raise,
And utter forth a prelate's praise?
From Sion, distant and forlorn,
Like a good Catholic, I mourn.
My prince by heresy's infected,
Religion's not by him respected.
It fills my soul with poignant woe,
To think that in the shades below
He shall, with ancients, have his place,
Ancients who were quite void of grace;
We know those heroes, thrice renowned,
Are punished in the abyss profound;
With them he must be damned, because
He in this world lived by their laws.
But still I'm much more grieved to find
A shocking vice infects his mind;
A vice, by men called toleration,
Which bears the opinions of each nation:
I'm shocked to think the Turkish crew,
The Quaker and the Lutheran too,
The Protestant and Papist find
Alike, with him, reception kind,
If they can by their actions claim
Of honest men the glorious name.
But, crime more shocking to reveal,

He laughs at sanguinary zeal;
That hate which bigots fills with rage,
Which gentle pity can't assauge,
But which the Free-thinker, professed,
Profanely turns into a jest:
What can your Eminence then hope
From me, who don't revere the Pope?
From me, who am the chamberlain
Of a prince obdurate in sin?
You, whose predestinated front
Bears double marks of honor on't.
Whose scarlet hat, with laurels bound,
Shows you for poetry renowned;
Who Horace and St. Austin's lore,
With equal genius could explore,
Who equally dost know to rise
To Pindus top, and paradise,
Convert that genius; you can please,
And teach mankind with equal ease;
Of Jesus Christ, the grace divine,
Does often through your writings shine,
And in them often we admire
Both Homer's grace and Homer's fire.

TO THE MARQUIS OF ISSARTS, AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE AT THE COURT OF DRESDEN.

VERSAILLES, April 7, 1747.

Sir: The kind letter with which you favored me, gives me at once pleasure and regret; at the same time that it delights me, it makes me sensible of the loss I have sustained. I might have been present at the very moment when your Excellency signed the treaty by which France was made happy. I might have seen the court of Dresden, but I never

saw it. I was not born to be happy; but your happiness, Sir, you will own even to equal your merit. What you left at Versailles, is restored to you at Dresden; you have there met with a king beloved by his subjects.

One day you'll make us a report
Which king has the most brilliant court,
Whether Louis or Augustus' name
To glory has the better claim.
A point like this might well confound
Sagacity the most profound,
You'll find e'en ten years' labor vain
This difficulty to explain.

Nothing can better prove how hard a matter it is to discover truth in this world; and then, Sir, those who know it best are the last to divulge it. For example, can those who have had the honor of being admitted to the presence of the three princesses with whom the Queen of Poland has blessed France, Naples, and Munich ever determine which of the three nations is happiest?

Should we even of the queen inquire
Which daughter we should most admire;
Which of the three does most excel,
She'd sure be much perplexed to tell:
But if you should of me inquire
Which gratitude should most inspire,
Which the most hope should entertain,
In doubt I should not long remain.

When I see the Dauphin and Dauphiness, I think of Psyche, and recollect that Psyche had two sisters:

Both filled the gazers with delight,
The Courts of both alike were bright;
Both were with tender spouses wedded,
But Psyche was with Cupid bedded.

But perhaps, Sir, an end might be put to this dispute, and Paris would, upon such an occasion, cut his apple into three pieces.

The prize of beauty should adorn
Her to whom first a daughter's born,
In whom we shall with transport trace
The beauty of her royal race.

You see, Sir, that, though I am not a politician, I can contrive means to accommodate matters, and I do not doubt but you will approve of my sentiments.

I have the honor of being, with the utmost respect,

Your Excellency's most humble servant.

TO CARDINAL DU BOIS[1]

CAMBRAY, July, 1722.

Rupelmonde for her charms renowned,
With whom I rove the world around,
Whom the young loves in crowds attend,
To whose commands all mortals bend,
Desires I'd write to you; my muse
Can nothing to the fair refuse.
By hopes to please her I'm excited,
And with the given talk delighted.

[1] This epistle was written in 1722. It has been printed several times, but never before from the original. Madame de Rupelmonde was a daughter of Marshal D'Alegre, wife of a Flemish nobleman, and mother of the Marquis of Rupelmonde, who was killed in Bavaria.

We have just arrived at your eminence's metropolis, which, I think, all the ambassadors and all the cooks in Europe have chosen as their place of rendezvous. The German ambassadors seem to have nothing to do at Cambray but drink the emperor's health. As for the ambassadors of Spain, one hears two masses a day, and the other superintends the company of comedians. The English ministers send several couriers to Champagne, and very few to London. Nobody expects to see your eminence; it is not apprehended that you will quit your royal palace in order to visit your pulpit. It would be a great mortification to us, as well as to you, if you were obliged to quit the ministry in order to turn apostle.

May gentlemen of deep design,
Who at the congress drink good wine,
Find means upon foundation sure,
The peace of Europe to secure,
May you your city love, but ne'er
Think it worth while to visit there.
I know you homilies can make,
In hand the bishop's crosier take,
Can mass upon occasion say,
And in a voice sonorous pray.
Rather teach princes how to shine,
Prudence with lively wit combine;
Let Europe's general voice proclaim
Your mighty deeds, resound your fame;
Blessed by all virtuous Frenchmen live,
Do not at Cambray blessings give.

Sometimes, my lord, remember a man who regrets nothing so much as not having it in his power to converse with your eminence as often as he could

wish, and who considers the honor of your company as the greatest favor you can confer on him.

CARDINAL DE FLEURY TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

Issi, November 14, 1740.

Sir: I have just received your second letter, and answer it without losing a moment, for fear the Marquis of Beauvau should have quitted Berlin. I cannot but approve of your journey thither; and you are attached to the King of Prussia by ties so just and so strong, that you cannot refuse him this mark of your respect and gratitude. The Queen of Sheba's motive alone would have been sufficient to induce you to agree to it.

I did not know that the valuable present of "Anti-Machiavel," which was made me by the Marchioness of Châtelet, came from you; it is the more dear to me upon that account, and I return you my hearty thanks. As I have little leisure to bestow upon my amusements, I have not hitherto been able to read above forty pages of it, and I shall endeavor to read it through in this place, which I improperly call my retreat, as there is too much perplexity and trouble in it to allow me much repose.

Whoever be the author of this work, if he is not a prince, he deserves to be one, and the small part of it which I have read is so wise, so reasonable, and contains such admirable principles, that he who composed it would deserve to govern all other men, if he had the courage to carry them into execution; if he was born a prince, he enters into a solemn

engagement with the public. The Emperor Antoninus would never have acquired that immortal glory which he will preserve forever, if he had not by the justice of his government enforced the admirable system of morality, of which he had given such instructive lessons to all sovereigns.

You say so many obliging things of me, that I am afraid I should not give credit to them all; but they give me, however, high satisfaction, as they are at least tokens of your friendship. I should be greatly pleased if the King of Prussia could find in my conduct any conformity to his principles; for I assure you, I look upon them as the model of the most perfect and most glorious government.

I, unknown to myself, deviate into political reflections, and shall conclude, by assuring you that I will do my utmost to deserve the good opinion which his Prussian majesty has of me. The quality of prince, is in him superfluous; if he was only a private individual, everybody would think it an honor to be connected with him. I envy you that happiness, sir, and felicitate you upon it the more, as you are indebted for it only to your talents and your virtues.

M. DE VOLTAIRE'S ANSWER TO CARDINAL DE FLEURY.

BERLIN, November 26, 1740.

My Lord: I received your letter of the fourteenth, which was conveyed to me by the Marquis of Beauvau. I have obeyed the orders which your eminence did not think proper to give me in ex-

press terms. I have shown your letter to the King of Prussia; he is the more sensible of your praises, as he deserves them, and he appears to me disposed to deserve those of all the nations of Europe. It were to be wished, for their happiness, or at least for that of a great part of them, that the King of France and the King of Prussia were friends. This concerns you; my business is to offer up my best wishes, and be always devoted to you with the most profound respect.

CARDINAL ALBERONI TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

ROME, February 10, 1735.

Sir: It was long before your life of the late King of Sweden came to my knowledge, which obliged me to defer returning you my thanks for that part of it which concerned me. Your prepossession in my favor has carried you a great way, since you have in your sublime style said more of me in two words, than Pliny has said of Trajan in his whole panegyric. Happy the princes who can find means to interest you in their exploits, your pen insures their immortality. With regard to myself, I assure you of the warmest sentiments of gratitude, and that no one living loves, esteems and honors you more than Cardinal Alberoni.

M. DE VOLTAIRE'S ANSWER.

My Lord: The letter with which your eminence has honored me is as acceptable a record of my

works as the esteem of Europe can be of your actions. I was not entitled to your thanks, my lord; I was only the organ of the public when I spoke of you. Liberty and truth, which have always guided my pen, secured me your suffrage. Those two characters are sure to please such a genius as yours. Whoever does not love them, may become a powerful, but can never be a great, man; I should be glad to have an opportunity of admiring from a nearer viewpoint him to whom I have done justice at a distance. I do not flatter myself that I shall ever be so happy as to see your eminence. But if Rome understands her interests enough even to desire to re-establish arts and commerce, and restore splendor to a country which was once mistress of the world, I hope I shall then write to you by a different title from that of your eminence, of whom I have the honor to subscribe myself with the most profound respect.

BUSINESS LETTERS.

In the correspondence between Voltaire and Abbé Moussinot we see the leading dramatic writer of his period as the sagacious man of affairs, interested in every detail affecting his position as capitalist, scientific investigator, and country gentleman. The abbé was the business man of the local clerics, with a shrewd judgment in financial matters and an eye to the main chance in picture-buying. He acted for Voltaire during eight years, with mutual satisfaction. The first letter, dated March, 1736, sets forth their relations:

"My Dear Abbé: I love your strong-box a thousand times better than that of a notary; there is no one in the world whom I trust as I do you; you are as intelligent as you are virtuous. You were made to be the solicitor-general of the order of the Jansenists, for you know that they call their union 'the Order'; it is their cant; every community, every society, has its cant. Consider, then, if you are willing to take charge of the funds of a man who is not devout, and to do from friendship for that undevout man what you do for your chapter as a duty. You will be able in this way to make some good bargains in buying pictures; you will borrow from me some of the money in your strong-box. My affairs, as you know, are very easy and very simple; you will be my superintendent wherever I may be myself; you will speak for me, and in your own name, to the Villars, to

the Richelieus, to the d'Estaings, to the Guises, to the Guébriants, to the d'Auneuils, to the Lézeaux, and to other illustrious debtors of your friend. When a man speaks for his friend he asks justice; when it is I who solicit that justice, I have the air of asking a favor, and it is this that I wish to avoid. This is not all: you will act as my plenipotentiary, whether for my pensions payable by M. Paris-Duverney, by M. Tannevot, first clerk of the finances, or for the interest due me from the Hôtel-de-Ville, from Arouet, my brother, as well as for the bonds and money which I have at different notaries. You will have, my dear abbé, carte-blanche for all that which concerns me, and everything will be conducted in the greatest secrecy. Write me word if this charge is agreeable to you. Meanwhile, I pray you to send your frotteur to find a young man named Baculard d'Arnaud: he is a student in philosophy at the College of Harcourt; he lives in the Rue Mouffetard. Give him, I beg you, this little manuscript (the 'Epistle upon Calumny'), and make him from me a little present of twelve francs. I entreat you not to neglect this small favor which I ask you; this manuscript will be sold for his advantage. I embrace you with all my heart; love me always, and, especially, let us bind the bonds of our friendship closer by mutual confidence and reciprocal services."

Again in May he writes: "To punish you, my dear friend, for not having sent to find the young Baculard d'Arnaud, student in philosophy at the College of Harcourt, and living with M. Delacroix, Rue Mouffetard—to punish you, I say, for not

having given him the 'Epistle upon Calumny' and twelve francs, I condemn you to give him a louis d'or, and to exhort him from me to learn to write, which will contribute to his fortune. This is a little work of charity which, whether Christian or mundane, must not be neglected. . . . . I expect news from you with impatience, and I embrace you with all my heart. I write to this young d'Arnaud. Instead of twenty-four francs, give him thirty livres when he comes to see you. I am going to seal my letter quick for fear that I augment the sum. Received thirty livres. Signed, Baculard d'Arnaud."

Here is a "Henriade" item: "Thirty-five thousand francs for tapestries of the 'Henriade'! That is much, my dear treasurer. It would be necessary, before all, to know how much the tapestry of Don Quixote sold for; it would be necessary, especially before commencing that M. de Richelieu should pay me my fifty thousand francs. Let us suspend, then, every project of tapestry, and let M. Oudri do nothing without more ample information. Buy for me, my dear abbé, a little table which may serve at once as screen and writing-desk, and send it in my name to the house of Madame de Winterfield, Rue Plâtrière. Still another pleasure. There is a Chevalier de Mouhi, who lives at the Hotel Dauphin, Rue des Orties; this chevalier wishes to borrow of me a hundred pistoles, and I am very willing to lend them to him. Whether he comes to your house, or whether you go to his, I pray you to say to him that I take pleasure in obliging literary men when I can, but that I am actually very much embarrassed in my affairs; that nevertheless

you will do all you can to find this money, and that you hope the reimbursement will be secured in such a way that there will be nothing to risk; after which you will have the goodness to inform me who this chevalier is, as well as the result of these preliminaries. Eighteen francs to the little d'Arnaud. Tell him I am sick and cannot write. Pardon all these trifles. I am a very tedious dabbler, but I love you with all my heart."

Voltaire always drew a line between the legitimately expensive and the extravagant. See the shrewd mot on buying in the letter of November, 1737:

"Oudri, my dear abbé, appears to me expensive; but if he makes two sets of hangings, can we not have them a little cheaper? I might be able even to have three of them made. If M. de Richelieu pays me, it will be well for me to invest my money in that way. The countenance of Henry IV. and that of Gabrielle d'Estrées in tapestry will succeed very well. Good Frenchmen will wish to have some Gabrielles and Henrys, especially if the good Frenchmen are rich. We are not very rich ourselves just now; but the holy time of Christmas will give us, I hope, some consolation. Cannot Chevalier come to Cirey to execute under my own eyes designs from the 'Henriade'? Does he know enough of his art for that? They speak well of him, but he has not yet sufficient reputation to be unteachable. It is said there is at Paris a man who draws portraits to be worn in rings in a perfect manner. I have seen a face of Louis XV. of his doing, which was an excellent likeness. Have the

goodness, my dear abbé, to disinter this man. You will find it impertinent that the same hand should paint the king and poor me; but friendship wishes it, and I obey friendship. The Chevalier de Mouhi, then, will send twice a week to Cirey the gossip of Paris. Enjoin it upon him to be infinitely secret; give him a hundred crowns, and promise him a payment once a month, or every three months, as he prefers. I treat you, my dear friend, as I beg you will treat me. I should be glad to be so happy as to receive some orders from you."

In October he writes: "I could wish, my dear and faithful treasurer, to have, under the greatest secrecy, some ready money deposited with a discreet and faithful notary, which he could place at interest for a time, and which, if necessary, I could get back without delay. The sum would be fifty thousand francs, and perhaps more. Are you not acquainted with a notary in whom you could confide? The whole would be in your name. I am very much discontented with M. Perret; he has two excellent qualities for a public man, he is brutal and indiscreet. . . . Have the goodness to give another louis d'or to d'Arnaud. Tell him then to have himself called simply d'Arnaud; that is a fine Jansenist name; Baculard is ridiculous."

Voltaire had perfect confidence in the abbé's discretion. "I find myself, my dear treasurer, in the situation of always having before me a large sum of money to dispose of. Your letters will be henceforth addressed to Madame d'Azilli, at Cirey. Put nothing in them too clearly which might re-

veal that it is I to whom you write. I find my obscurity convenient. I wish to have no correspondence with any one; I pretend to be ignored of all the world except you, whom I love with all my heart, and whom I beg very earnestly to find me a literary correspondent who will give me news with exactness, and whom you will leave in ignorance of my retreat."

"The principal of the debt of M. de Richelieu is 46,417 livres; date, May 5, 1735."

This bears date March, 1737. "I am very glad, my dear correspondent, that M. Berger thinks I am in England. I am there for all the world except you. Send, I pray you, a hundred louis d'or to M. the Marquis du Châtelet, who will bring them to me. Now, my dear abbé, are you willing that I should speak to you frankly? It is necessary for you to do me the favor of accepting every year a little honorarium, merely as a mark of my friendship. Let us not beat about the bush. You have a small salary from your canons; treat me as a chapter; take twice as much every year from your friend, the poet-philosopher, as your cloister gives you; this without prejudice to the gratitude which I shall always cherish. Arrange this and love me."

Later: "I repeat to you, my tender friend, my urgent request not to speak of my affairs to any one, and especially to say that I am in England. I have the very strongest reasons for that. In the present critical situation of my affairs, it would be very imprudent for me to embark in the commerce with Pinega a large sum, which would be too long in yielding returns. Therefore, let us not invest

in that commerce more than four or five thousand francs for our amusement; a like sum in pictures, which will amuse you still more. The paper of the farmers-general brings in six per cent. a year; it is the surest investment of money. Amuse yourself again in that. Buy some bonds. That merchandise will fall in a short time; at least, I think so; that is another honest recreation for a canon; and I leave to your intelligence everything that relates to those amusements. Besides, let us put into the hands of M. Michel, whose probity and fortune you know, one-half of our ready money at five per cent., and not more; were it only for six months, that would produce something. In the matter of interest nothing must be neglected, and in investing our money we must always conform to the law of the prince. Let all that, like my other affairs, be a profound secret. Still eighteen francs to d'Arnaud, and two 'Henriades.' I see that I give you more trouble than all your chapter, but I shall not be so ungrateful."

"M. the Abbé de Breteuil has come here. He is in quest of some engravings for his rooms; if I have still half a dozen pretty enough, you will do me, my dear friend, the favor to send them. You will have the goodness to send with them a word or two, in the way of a note, to the effect that, having recommended that the engravings of mine which are left should be presented to him, you have but these, and he is requested to accept them. Besides the two thousand four hundred francs which you are to give to the Marquis du Châtelet, it is necessary to give him fifty livres. It

is necessary also, my dear abbé, to find a man who will give us at Cirey twice a week a letter of news. I ask a thousand pardons, my generous correspondent, for the tiresome details of my commissions, but you must have pity upon country people, by whom you are tenderly loved."

Certain affairs have gone wrong. Writing in May, Voltaire shows his capacity for business. "You are going, then, to Rouen, my dear treasurer? See, I pray you, the Marquis de Lézeau. Speak to him of the poverty of our cash box. I am confident that you will induce him to pay; you have the gift of persuasion. It is, my dear abbé, of absolute necessity that I should know how it is that I have forgotten having given a receipt to M. the President d'Auneuil. It must be some one else who has given this receipt, and who has received the money for me; it is from the mouth of Demoulin that you can know whether this money has been received or not. Mesnil, the notary, delivered it; Demoulin ought to have received it. This man, who robbed me of twenty thousand francs, and who is an ingrate, could he have pilfered also that half year's payment? It is necessary to address ourselves to those two individuals in order to know the truth; and if neither of them remember the facts it will be well that M. d'Auneuil should be informed that I know no more of the matter than they. In matters of interest and money we cannot be too careful and exact; we should foresee everything and guard against everything. M. de Richelieu owes only for one year; it is not proper to demand that year's interest at a time

when he is paying me forty-three thousand two hundred francs. I would not hinder him, however, from giving me some ready money, if he wishes to do so; but I shall be very content with a good assignment, as well for the two thousand nine hundred livres of arrears which I am still to receive from him as for the annuity of four thousand francs which he pays me every year. In that case he would be importuned no more, and our affairs would be more according to rule and easier to manage. You can, my dear abbé, send by the coach, in perfect safety, three hundred louis well packed, without saying what they are and without expense, provided the box be well and duly registered as containing valuables; that will suffice. Besides these three hundred louis, I must have a draft for two thousand four hundred francs; the receiver-general of Champagne will give you this draft for your money. Any banker will tell you the name and residence of the receiver-general. I am ashamed of all the trouble I give you, and I am obliged to avow, my dear friend, that you were made to manage greater affairs than the treasury of a chapter of Saint Merri and the revenue of a philosopher who embraces you with all his heart. In this world one is rarely what he ought to be."

The poet-philosopher becomes an employer of expert labor. "This man who has the secret of spinning brass is not the only one; but I believe that only a little of it can be spun, and that it easily breaks. Sound this man of brass; we might be able to have him here, and give him a chamber, a laboratory, his board, and a salary of a hundred

crowns. It would be in his power to make some experiments, and to try and make steel, which assuredly is much easier than to make gold. If he has the misfortune to seek the philosopher's stone, I am not surprised that from six thousand francs a year he is reduced to nothing. A philosopher who has six thousand francs a year has the philosopher's stone. That stone brings us, very naturally, to speak of affairs of interest. Here is the certificate which you ask for. I repeat to you my prayers that M. de Guise, M. de Lézeau, and others may be written to without delay; that you see M. Paris-Duverney, and let him know that he will give me great pleasure if he permits me to enjoy the pension from the queen and from the royal treasury, of which I am in very great need, and for which I shall be much obliged. Be willing also, my dear abbé, to arrange, in some amiable way, my annuity, my capital overdue, and the arrears, with the steward of M. de Richelieu; the whole without betraying an unbecoming distrust. That should have been done more than a month ago. An assurance of regular payment would spare the duke disagreeable details, would deliver his steward from great embarrassment, would spare you, my dear friend, many useless steps, many fatiguing and unfruitful labors. We shall say more of this another time, for I am afraid of forgetting to ask you for a very good air-pump, which is hard to find; a good reflecting telescope, which is at least as rare; the volumes of pieces which have been crowned at the Academy. Such are the learned things which my little learned mind has very urgent

need of. I have, my dear abbé, neither the time nor the strength to continue, nor even to thank you for the chemist whom you sent me. As yet, I have scarcely seen him, except at mass; he loves solitude; he ought to be content. I shall not be able to work with him in chemical matters until an apartment which I am building is finished; till then we must each of us study apart, and you must love me always."

"It is necessary, my dear friend, to ask, to ask again, to press, to see, to importune, and not persecute my debtors for my annuities and arrears. A letter costs nothing; two are only a very trifling embarrassment, and serve the purpose that a debtor cannot complain if I am obliged to avail myself of legal means of redress. After two letters to the farmers at an interval of a month, and a little word of excuse to the masters, it will be necessary to issue formal demands to the farmers of the lands upon which my annuities are secured. I will send you the list of them. For the rest of my life it will be with the farmers that I shall have to do. That will be a much better plan. Pinga says everywhere that he is selling my effects, and that has a much worse effect than all I sell. I flatter myself, my dear friend, that you will keep much better the secret of all my affairs. You have, God be thanked, all the good qualities."

"Great thanks, my dear abbé, for the present given to La Mare, and the more because it is the last which my affairs permit me to accord him. If ever he comes to importune you, do not let him take up your time. Reply that you have noth-

ing to do with my business; that cuts the matter short. Ascertain if it is true that this little gentleman, whom I have overwhelmed with benefits, rails also against me. Speak to Demoulin gently. He should indeed blush at his conduct toward me; he has deprived me of twenty thousand francs, and wishes to dishonor me. In losing twenty thousand francs I need not acquire an enemy. Another request, my dear abbé. A friend, who asks of me an inviolable secrecy, charges me to ascertain what is the subject of the prize essay announced this year by the Academy of Sciences. I know no man more secret than you; it will be you, then, my dear friend, who will render us this service. If I were to write to some member of the Academy, he would think, perhaps, that I wished to compete for the prize; that would suit neither my age nor my defective knowledge."

Here we have the experimental philosopher in his laboratory. "Arm yourself with courage, my dear and amiable agent, for to-day I am going to be exceedingly troublesome. Here is a learned negotiation, in which it is necessary, if you please, that you succeed, and that I be not found out. A visit to M. de Fontenelle, and a long explanation upon what is understood by the propagation of fire. Disputants, among whom I sometimes take a fancy to thrust myself, discuss the question whether fire has or has not weight. M. Lémeri, whose 'Chemistry' you sent me, asserts that, after having calcined twenty pounds of lead, he found it increased in weight five pounds; he does not say whether he weighed the earthen vessel in which

the calcination was made, to ascertain if any carbon had joined itself to the lead; he supposes simply, or rather boldly, that the lead has absorbed some particles of fire, which have augmented its weight. Five pounds of fire! Five pounds of light! That is admirable, and so admirable that I do not believe it. Other scientific men have made experiments with a view to ascertain the weight of fire. They have put filings of copper and filings of tin into glass retorts hermetically sealed; they have calcined these filings, and they have found them increased in weight: an ounce of copper has acquired forty-nine grains, and an ounce of tin four grains. Antimony calcined by the rays of the sun, by means of the burning-glass, has also increased in weight in the hands of the chemist, Homberg. I wish that all those statements may be true; I wish that the matter in which the metals were held during calcination may not have contributed to increase the weight of those metals; but I who speak to you have weighed more than a thousand pounds of red-hot iron, and I have afterward weighed it cold. I have not found a grain of difference. Now it would be very curious that twenty pounds of lead, calcined, should gain five pounds in weight, and that a thousand pounds of red-hot iron should not weigh one grain the heavier. Such, my dear abbé, are the difficulties which for a month past have wearied the head of your friend, little accustomed to physical investigations, and rendered him uncertain in chemistry, just as other difficulties of a different order render him shaky upon some points little important of scholastic theology. In

every science we seek the truth in good faith, and when we think we have found it, we are often embracing only an error. Now for the favor which I ask of you. Go to your neighbor, M. Geoffroy, apothecary to the Academy of Sciences; get into conversation with him by means of half a pound of quinquina, which you will buy and send to me. Ask him respecting the experiments of Lémeri, of Homberg, and mine. You are a very skilful negotiator; you will easily find out what M. Geoffroy thinks of all that, and you will tell me what he says—the whole without committing me. I am, as you see, my dear friend, much occupied with physical matters; but I do not forget that superfluity which they name the necessary. I hope that Hébert will not delay to finish it, and that he will spare nothing in rendering it elegant and magnificent."

A month later: "Are you willing, my dear friend, to pay a visit, long or short as you like, to M. Bouldue, a learned chemist? I am informed that he has made some experiments which tend to prove that fire does not augment the weight of bodies! The point is to have a conversation with him on that subject. There is also a M. Grosse, who lives in the same building. He is also a chemist, very intelligent and very laborious. I pray you to ask both of these gentlemen what they think of the experiments of the lead calcined by ordinary fire, and of the metals calcined by the rays of the sun concentrated through the burning-glass. They will feel it a pleasure to speak to you, to instruct you, and you will send me a statement of their

philosophic instructions. This, my dear correspondent, is a commision much more amusing than to arrange a composition with the creditors of the Prince de Guise. That prince has always concealed from me the appointment of a commission for the liquidation of his debts. A life annuity ought to be sacred; he owes me three years' income. A commission established by the king is not established for the purpose of frustrating the creditors. Life annuities ought certainly to be expected from the operation of the laws most favorable to debtors of dishonest intentions. Speak of this, I pray you, to M. de Machault; and after having represented to him my right and the injury which I suffer, you will act as he will direct. It is essential for us to avail ourselves of legal methods, and it is proper to do so with all the consideration possible. Do not trust the positive promise of the Prince de Guise. The positive promises of princes are trifles, and his are worse."

Once more, next day's postscript, June 30. "Another little visit, my dear friend, to M. Geoffroy. Send him back, by means of some ounces of quinquina, or of senna, or of manna, or of anything else which you may be pleased to buy for your own health or for mine—send him back, I tell you, to the chapter of lead and the regulus of antimony increased in weight by calcination. He has told you, and it is true, that those substances lose the increase of weight after becoming cold again; but that is not enough. It is necessary to know if that weight is lost when the calcined body becomes simply cold again, or if it is lost when the calcined

body has been afterward melted. Lémeri, who reports that twenty pounds of calcined lead weigh twenty-five pounds, adds that this lead remelted only weighs nineteen pounds. MM. Duclos and Homberg report that the regulus of iron and that of antimony calcined by the burning-glass increased in weight, but that upon being melted afterward by the same glass they lost both the weight which they had acquired and a little of their own. It is then not after having become cold that these bodies lose the weight added to their substance by the action of the fire. It would be necessary also to know if M. Geoffroy thinks that the igneous matter alone has caused this increase of weight; if the iron ladle with which they stirred during the operation, or if the vessel which contained the metal, did not increase the weight of that metal by transfusing into it some of its own substance. Ascertain, my dear friend, the opinion of the apothecary upon all these points, and send it to me quickly. You are very capable of making this chemist talk, and all the chemists of the Academy, and of understanding them well. I count upon your friendship and discretion."

Note the admirable tact of these instructions on rather dry business. "It is a pleasure, my dear friend, to give you learned commissions, so well do you acquit yourself of them. No one could render service better or more promptly. I have just performed the experiment upon iron which the learned charcoal-burner, M. Grosse, advises. I weighed a piece of two pounds, which I made red-hot upon a tile in the open air. I weighed it red, I

weighed it cold; it always weighed the same. I have been weighing every day lately, iron and melted iron, flaming hot; I have weighed from two pounds to a thousand. So far from finding the weight of red-hot iron greater, I have found it much smaller, which I attribute to the furnace, prodigiously hot, which consumed some particles of iron. It is this which I pray you to communicate to M. Grosse when you see him; visit, then, promptly this gnome, and, with your usual precaution, consult him anew. He is a man well informed upon these subjects. Ascertain, then: 1, if he believes that fire has weight; 2, if the experiments made by M. Homberg and others ought to prevail over that of the iron red and iron cooled, which always weigh the same. We are surrounded, my dear abbé, with uncertainties of all possible kinds. The least truth gives us infinite pains to discover. 3. Ask him if the burning-glass of the Palais-Royal has the same effect upon matter exposed to the air as in the vacuum of the air-pump. Upon this point you must make him talk a long time. Ask him the effect of the rays of the sun in that vacuum upon gunpowder, upon iron, upon liquors, upon metals, and make a little note of all the answers of this learned man. 4. Ask him if the phosphorus of Boyle, the burning phosphorus, takes fire in a vacuum. Finally, ask if he has seen any good Persian naphtha, and if it is true that this naphtha burns in water. There you are, my dear abbé, a finished natural philosopher. I pester you terribly, for I still add that I am in a hurry for this information. I abuse your complaisance ex-

cessively, but in atonement I love you excessively."

Again: "Every day, my dear friend, brings you, then, new importunity from me. Tell me, will it not be abusing your patience to pray you to see M. Grosse again, and to have with that celebrated chemist a new scientific conversation? See him, then, and have the goodness to ask that learned charcoal-burner if he has ever performed the experiment of plunging his thermometer in spirits of wine, in spirits of nitre, to see if the mercury rises in those liquors. I am, my dear abbé, always ashamed of my importunities; but spare neither carriages nor messengers, and always transact the affairs of your friend entirely at your ease."

October brings a change to finance. "Is M. de Brézé quite solid? What do you think of it, my prudent friend? This article of interest having been maturely examined, take twenty thousand francs from M. Michel and give them to M. Brézé, at ten per cent. This investment will be the more agreeable, as we shall be paid easily and regularly upon the proceeds of his houses in Paris. Arrange this affair for the best; and, once arranged, if the estate of Spoix can be bought for fifty thousand francs, we shall find the money toward the month of April. We shall sell some bonds. We shall borrow at five per cent, which will not be difficult either to you or to me. Life is short; Solomon tells us we must enjoy it; I think to enjoy, and for that reason I feel within me a grand vocation to be gardener, plowman, and vine-dresser. Perhaps even I shall succeed better in planting trees, in digging the earth, and in making it fruitful than in composing

tragedies, experimenting in chemistry, writing epic poems, and other sublime follies which make implacable foes. Give 'L'Enfant Prodigue' (*The Prodigal*) to Prault for fifty louis d'or—six hundred francs down, and a note for the other six hundred francs, payable when this unhappy *Enfant* shall see the light. This money will be employed in some good work. I do not rebel against my destiny, which is to have a little glory and some hisses."

Here is a letter which, as to style, none but Voltaire could have written. It is dated November, 1737. "Your patience, my dear abbé, is going to be put to a severe proof; I tremble lest you may be unable to sustain it. I hope everything from your friendship. Affairs temporal, affairs spiritual, these are the two great subjects of the long babble with which I am about to trouble you. M. de Lézeau owes me three years; it is necessary to press him without too much importunity. A letter to the Prince de Guise; that costs nothing, and advances matters. The Villars and the d'Auneuils owe two years; it is necessary politely and nicely to remonstrate with those gentlemen touching their duties to their creditors. It is necessary also to finish with M. de Richelieu, and to consent to what he wishes. I should have some great objections to make upon what he proposes; but I love better a conclusion than an objection. Conclude, then, my dear friend; I trust myself blindly to your discretion, which is always very useful to me. Prault ought to give fifty francs to monsieur, your brother. I wish him to do so. It is a trifling *bonus*,

a bagatelle, which is part of my bargain; and when that bagatelle shall be paid, monsieur, your brother, will scold for me the negligent Prault, who in the parcels of books which I order always makes delays that try my patience cruelly; nothing that he sends me arrives at the time appointed. Monsieur, your brother, will then inquire of that book-seller, or of any other that he wishes, for a Puffendorf; for the chemistry of Boerhaave, the most complete edition; for a 'Letter upon the Divisibility of Matter,' published by Jonvert; for the 'Index of the Thirty-First Volume of the History of the Academy of Sciences'; for Marriotte upon the 'Nature of the Air'; the same author upon 'Cold and Heat'; for Boyle '*De Ratione inter Ignem et Flammam*,' difficult to find; that is the affair of monsieur, your brother. Other commissions: two reams of foolscap, the same of letter paper—the whole of Holland, twelve sticks of Spanish sealing-wax for spirits of wine; a Copernican sphere; a burning-glass of the largest size; my engravings of the Luxembourg; two globes mounted; two thermometers; two barometers (the longest are the best); two scales, well graduated; some crucibles; some retorts. In making purchases, my friend, always prefer the handsome and excellent, if a little dear, to a common article less costly.

"So much for the literary man who seeks to instruct himself after the Fontenelles, the Boyles, the Boerhaaves, and other learned men. What follows is for the material man, who digests very ill, who has need to take, as they tell him, plenty of exercise; and who beside this need, of necessity has also

some other needs of society. I pray you, in consequence, to buy for him a good fowling-piece; a pretty game-bag with appurtenances; a gun-hammer; a draw-charge; large diamond shoe-buckles; other diamond garter-buckles; twenty pounds of hair powder; ten pounds of smelling powder; a bottle of essence of jasmin; two enormous pots of orange pomatum; two powder puffs; a very good knife; three fine sponges; three dusters; four bundles of quills; two pairs of toilet pincers, very nice; a pair of very good pocket scissors; two floor brushes; finally, three pairs of slippers, well furred; and, besides—I remember nothing more. Of all these make a parcel; two, if necessary; three, even, if necessary: your packer is excellent. Send the whole by way of Joinville; not to my address, for I am in England—I beg you to remember that—but to the address of Madame de Champbonin. All that costs money, you will tell me; and where to get the money? Where you wish, my dear abbé. We have some bonds; we can convert them. We should never neglect anything for our pleasure, since life is short. I shall be entirely yours during that short life."

This December letter gives a glimpse of Voltaire's friendlier relations with the booksellers. "Instead of money which Prault owes me, my dear abbé, I have ordered some books of him. You tell me he is dissatisfied; I am surprised at it; he ought to know that an author never deprives himself of the right of foreign editions. As soon as a book is printed at Paris with privilege, the publishers of Holland seize it, and the first who prints it has the

exclusive privilege in that country; and to have this right of printing it first it suffices to announce the work in the gazettes. It is an established usage which holds the place of law. Now, when I wish to favor a publisher in Holland, I advise him of the work which I am printing in France, and I endeavor to let him have the first copy, in order that he may get beforehand with the trade. I have then promised a Holland publisher that I will immediately send him a copy of the work in question, and I have promised him this little favor to indemnify him for the delay in finishing the elements of the philosophy of Newton, which he began to print nearly a year ago. The point is to hurry on Prault, in order at the same time to hasten the little advantage which will indemnify the Holland publisher, for whom I have an affection, and who is a very honest man. M. Prault knows very well that this is the point. His privilege is for France, and not for Holland. He has never done business except upon this footing, and on condition that the work should be printed at Paris and at Amsterdam simultaneously. To prevent all difficulty, send him this note, and let him put in it his reply. These are the facts, and I ask your pardon for this verbiage. Prault still owes fifty francs to monsieur, your brother; I wish him to pay them. This is a new bonus which I beg your brother to accept. I pray him also to send me the old tragedy of 'Cresphonte,' and all the old books which I have noted upon the catalogue which he sent me."

This letter, also of December, is dated as from England. "I am very glad, my dear natural phi-

losopher, that M. de Fontenelle has explained himself touching the propagation of fire. As the light of the sun is the most powerful fire we know, it was natural to have some ideas a little clear upon that elementary fire. It was the affair of a philosopher; the rest is a blacksmith's business. I am in the midst of forges, and the subject suits me well enough. I hope that Bronod will explain himself as clearly respecting the fifty louis of which you speak as M. de Fontenelle upon light. If Bronod does not pay this money, I believe it will be necessary to sell a bond. I see no great harm in that; one never loses his dividend. It is true that the price varies toward the time of their payment, that is to say, every six months; but that amounts to little; and, besides, it is better to sacrifice some pistoles than give you the trouble of calling again upon M. Bronod. The three louis which you gave finally to M. Robert were doubtless for the advances he has made. I cannot imagine that a solicitor has taken it into his head to incur expense for me, since I have had no law business, unless I have had a suit without knowing it. M. Michel wishes, then, to keep my money until the first of March? Be it so. Let him have it; it will be always two months' interest gained. Let us not disdain such pickings. Make, I pray you, if you think it necessary, a little present to the steward of M. de Richelieu; but before doing so we must have good security for my arrears, and security that henceforth I receive regularly four thousand francs a year. A louis d'or to d'Arnaud, without telling him either where I am or what I am doing; neither

him nor any one else. I am at Cirey for you alone, and in Cochin China for all the Parisians, or, which will be more probable, confined in some province of England."

Highly amusing is this on his own portrait, a face in every aspect as striking as his pen-work. "The picture of myself drawn in pastel, my dear abbé, is horrible and wretched, whatever the engraver thinks; little do I care. I shall not take the part of my countenance, which I do not know too well, but, my dear friend, can they not make me less ugly? I leave that to your care; especially, do not speak of it to Madame du Châtelet. Let us come to the affair of this lady. See, as soon as possible, Hébert, and recommend to him the greatest diligence. You have given him fifty louis; give him fifty more if he demands them, and assure him that at the instant of delivery the whole shall be exactly paid. If, in accordance with my last letter, you have sold a bond, you have done well; if you have not sold one, still you have done well. I approve you in everything, because all that you do is always well done, and you deserve that I thank you and that I embrace you heartily."

This bears date July, 1740. "I received your letter of the 9th, in which you inform me of the *general* bankruptcy of the Receiver-General named Michel. A sufficiently large portion of my property is involved—40,000 francs. The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. To suffer my ills in patience has been my lot for forty years; and one can submit to Providence without being a devotee. I confess that I

did not expect this failure, and I do not understand how a receiver-general of the finances of his Most Christian Majesty, a very rich man, too, could fail so awkwardly, unless it is because he wished to be richer. In that case, M. Michel is doubly wrong. I could find it in my heart to cry:

Michel, au nom de l'Éternel,
Met jadis le diable en déroute;
Mais aprés cette banqueroute,
Que le diable emporte Michel.

In God's name, good St. Michael
Once made the devil flee;
But after this smash, Michael,
May the devil fly off with thee!

"But this would be a poor jest, and I do not wish to make light either of M. Michel's losses or of my own. Nevertheless, my dear abbé, you will find the result to be that M. Michel's children will remain very rich, very well placed. . . . Have the goodness to speak to Michel's cashier; endeavor to get from him how we should proceed so as not to lose all. . . . Good-night; I embrace you with all my soul. Console yourself for the rout of Michel; your friendship consoles me for my loss."

December, 1737: "You speak to me, my dear abbé, of a good chemist, and I hear you with pleasure. Then you propose that I should take him into my service; I ask nothing better. He will enjoy here complete liberty, be not ill lodged, be well nourished, have great convenience for cultivating at his ease his talent as a chemist; but it is indispensable that he should know how to say mass on Sundays and festivals in the chapel of the château.

This must be a condition without which I could not engage him. I will give him a hundred crowns [écus] a year, but I can do nothing more. He must also be informed that we take our meals very rarely with the Marquise du Châtelet, whose mealtimes are not very regular; but there is a table for the Count du Chatelet, her son, and his tutor, a man of understanding, served regularly at noon and at eight in the evening. M. du Châtelet, the elder, often eats at that table, and occasionally we all sup together. Besides, we enjoy here perfect liberty. For the present we can only give him a chamber with an antechamber. If he accepts my propositions, he can come and bring all his apparatus with him. If he is in need of money you can advance him a quarter, on condition that he starts at once. If he delays his departure, do not delay, my dear treasurer, to send me some money by the coach. Instead of two hundred and fifty louis, send boldly three hundred of them, with the books and the bagatelles I have asked for. For the rest, my dear friend, I take it for granted that your chemist is a man of sense, since you propose him. Tell me his name, for, really, I must know how he calls himself. If he makes Fahrenheit thermometers, he will make some here, and render service to natural philosophy. Are those thermometers of the same scale as Réaumur's? These instruments do not accord unless they sound the same octave."

Voltaire's "English Letters" appear in another volume. He quickly learned to speak and write the language with remarkable fluency. His first efforts were necessarily crude, and we may indulge a smile

at this early specimen of English composition without disrespect to the writer. The letter appears to have found its way into the columns of an English provincial paper in 1824, whence it was rescued in 1868 by *Notes and Queries*. It must have been written within a few months of his arrival in England, in May, 1726.

"Sir,—j wish you good health, a quick sale of y^r^ burgundy, much latin, and greeke to one of y^r^ children, much Law, much of cooke and littleton, to the other. quiet and joy to mistress brinsden, money to all. when you'll drink y^r^ burgundy with mr furneze, pray tell him j'll never forget his favours.

"But dear john be so kind as to let me know how does my lady Bollingbroke, as to my lord j left him so well j dont doubt he is so still. but j am very uneasie about my lady. If she might have as much health as she has spirit & witt, Sure she would be the Strongest body in england. Pray dear s^r^ write me Something of her, of my lord, and of you. direct y^r^ letter by the penny post at m^r^ Cavalier, Belitery square by the R Exchange. j am sincerely & heartily y^r^ most humble most obedient rambling friend

VOLTAIRE.

"john Brinsden, esq.
durham's yard
by charing cross."

How thoroughly Voltaire had mastered the English tongue is shown in these letters to his old friend and host, Sir Everard Falkener, of London, who had been appointed ambassador to the Sublime Porte:

Dated July 27, 1751: "Dear Sir: Fortune that hurries us to and fro in this transient world, attached you to a great prince, and carried me to the court of a great king. But, in these various tossings, my head will never prove giddy enough to forget your friendship. I hope you preserve some kindness for me, and I dare rely upon your good heart. I must tell you I have written a History of Louis XIV. You may presume it is written with truth, and not without liberty or freedom. I have been obliged to print it in Berlin at my own expense. I presume four or five hundred copies could sell off well in your country; the two things I have at heart, truth and liberty, being still dear to your countrymen, raise in me that expectation. I dare apply, my dear sir, to your kindness and friendship of old. You may perhaps recommend this business to some honest man, and even to a bookseller, who would be honest enough to merit your favor. I would direct the cargo to him, and he should take a reasonable salary for his trouble. If I can by your favor find any such man, I shall be most obliged to you. I hope you are a happy husband and a happy father, as you are a worthy Englishman."

This and the letters which follow appear to have had a good effect, as a subscription edition of Voltaire's works was duly announced. He strenuously objected to the publication without his revision.

Dated January, 27, 1752: "My 'Louis XIV.' is on the Elbe, about a month ago. I don't know whether the grand monarch has yet put to sea, to invade Great Britain. But booksellers are greater

politicians than Louis; and I think it is very likely they have got the start of me, by sending my book to London by the way of Rotterdam, while my bale of printed tales is on the Elbe; and so they will reap all the benefit of my labors, according to the noble way of the world. My book is prohibited among my dear countrymen, because I have spoken the truth; and the delays of cargoes, and the jarring of winds, hinder it from pursuing its journey to England. So, I have to fight with, or against the sea, and earth, and hell, for booksellers are the hell of writers. Be what it will, receive, my dear sir, my cargo of printed sheets, when wind and tide will permit. Do what you please with them; I am resigned. I had rather be read than be sold; truth is above trade, and reputation above money!"

March 27: "My dear and beneficent friend, I send to you, by the way of Hamburg, two enormous bales of the scribbling trade. I direct them to our envoy at Hamburg, who will dispatch them to you, and put my wares to sea, instead of throwing them into the fire; which might be the case in France, or at Rome. My dear friend, I have recourse to your free and generous soul. Some French, good patriots, who have read the book, raise a noble clamor against me, for having praised Marlborough and Eugene; and some good churchmen damn me for having turned a little into ridicule our *jansenisme* and *molinisme*. If our prejudiced people are fools, booksellers and printers or book-jobbers are rogues. I am like to be damned in France, and cheated by the Dutch; the old German honesty is gone. Booksellers of all religions

are the same. I shall lose all the fruits of my labors and expenses; but I rely on your kindness. You may cause some books to be bound, and choose an honest man, who will give them to the chief-readers of your nation. I entreat you to present His Royal Highness with one of these volumes, and to give some *exemplaires* or copies to those of your friends you will think fit. The bookseller you will choose may do what he pleases with the remainder, and sell them as best as he can, provided he sells them not before Easter; it is all I require of him."

The next is dated November 28. "I hope, my dear and worthy friend, my worthy Englishman, you have received my Lord Bolingbroke's vindication against priests, whom I have hated, hate, and I shall hate till doomsday. You will receive, my dear sir, in a very short time, as *exemplaire* of 'Louis XIV.,' a new edition, more accurate and correct a great deal, more copious and curious. I desire you would be so kind as to answer two letters which I wrote to you long ago. Let me not be altogether in the dark about the good or bad success of my book in England. Two editions of it have been published this year in Europe, and two new ones are just now come out. But your approbation would flatter me more than all that eagerness of the book-mongers. Tully relied more on the testimony of Cato than on the huzzas of the multitude. If you have any news of my book's fate, let me know something of it after a whole year. If you have given the volumes to a bookseller, be so good

as to tell me whether this bookseller has anything to remit to me, or not."

January 16, 1753: "I have reaped benefit enough, since I have pleased you, and not displeased your nation. I return you my most tender thanks. I hope to come over myself, in order to print my true works, and to be buried in the land of freedom. I require no subscription; I desire no benefit. If my works are neatly printed, and cheaply sold, I am satisfied."

February 1, 1754: "I have written to you already, and sent my letter to Sir Hanbury Williams, the British envoy at the court of Dresden. But I could not tell you enough about the desire I have to see England again before my death. I did inform you of my desire to print my works in London, without benefit, without subscription, and merely in order to give a true edition of the works of a Frenchman, who thinks like a Briton. I send this letter to Dresden. I must tell you, my dear sir, that I have taken the liberty to draw upon you for the ninety-four pounds. I return you again ninety-four thousand thanks."

Voltaire's commentaries on his plays will be found in the volumes containing the dramatic works and in various papers among the essays and short studies. These passages, from his letters to his friends, Cideville and Formont, in 1732, refer to the tragedy "Zaïre," on which he was then engaged:

"This play will be made for the heart, as much as '*Eriphile*' was for the imagination. The scene is to be laid in a very singular place, and the action will pass between Turks and Christians. I shall

depict their manners to the utmost of my ability, and I shall try to throw into the work all that the Christian religion has of most pathetic and most interesting, and all that love knows of most tender and cruel. Here is work for six months."

"Every one here reproaches me that I do not put more love into my pieces. There shall be love enough this time I swear to you, and not gallantry either. My desire is that there may be nothing so Turkish, so Christian, so amorous, so tender, so infuriate, as that which I am now putting into verse for the pleasure of the public. I have the honor already to have done an act of it. Either I am much deceived, or this will be the most peculiar piece we have upon our stage. The names of Montmorency, of Saint Louis, of Saladin, of Jesus, of Mahomet, will be in it. There will be mention of the Seine and of Jordan, of Paris and of Jerusalem. We shall love, we shall baptize, we shall kill, and I will send you the outline as soon as it is done . . . Don't ask me for news of the parliament. I know, and wish to know, only *les belles-lettres*."

June 25: "Hearty thanks, my dear friend, for the good advice you give me upon the plan of a tragedy; but it came too late. The tragedy was done. It cost me but twenty-two days. Never have I worked with such swiftness. The subject drew me on, and the piece made itself. . . . At present I am having it copied; as soon as I have a copy ready, it shall start for Rouen, and go to Messieurs de Formont and Cideville. Scarcely had I written the last verse of my Turco-Christian piece than I took up '*Eriphile*' again."

June 27: "A man just finishing a new tragedy has not time to write long letters, my amiable Cideville; but every scene of the piece was a letter which I wrote to you, and I said to myself continually, 'Will my tender and susceptible friend Cideville approve this situation or this sentiment? Shall I make him shed tears?' At length, after having rapidly written my work, in order the sooner to send it to you, I read it to the actors."

August 25: "My dear and amiable critics, I wish that you could be witnesses of the success of '*Zaïre*'; you would see that your advice was not useless, and that there was very little of it which I did not profit by. Permit me, my dear Cideville, to express to you freely the pleasure I enjoy in seeing the success of a work which you approved. My satisfaction increases in communicating it to you. Never piece was so well played as '*Zaïre*' at the fourth representation. I wished you there; you would have seen that the public did not hate your friend. I appeared in a box, and the whole pit clapped me. I blushed, I hid myself; but I should be a hypocrite if I did not confess to you that I was sensibly touched. It is sweet not to be without honor in one's own country: I am sure you will love me the more for the avowal. But, messieurs, send me back '*Eriphile*,' which I cannot do without, and which is going to be played at Fontainebleau. *Mon Dieu!* what a thing it is to choose an interesting subject! '*Eriphile*' is far better written than '*Zaïre*'; but all the ornaments, all the spirit and all the force of poetry are not worth—so people say—one touch of sentiment."

By his tragedies, poems in various moods, a comedy, and general repute as a wit, Voltaire had established his fame before the close of 1725. He was a favorite at court, a circumstance he turned to good account, and received a modest pension. With success such as this it might be supposed that a man but little past thirty would have been contented, if not completely happy. His letters at this time show that the courtier's life was not really congenial. Parton selects a few passages from the correspondence, dated just before the marriage of Louis XV.

"Every one here pays court to Madame de Beseuval, who is a distant relation of the queen. This lady, who has some *esprit*, receives with much modesty the marks of baseness which are given her. I saw her yesterday at the house of Marshal de Villars. Some one asked her what relation she was to the queen. She replied that queens have no relations. These nuptials of Louis XV are an injury to poor Voltaire. They talk of not paying the pensions, and even of not preserving them; but in recompense a new tax is to be imposed, to buy laces and fabrics for Mademoiselle Leczinska. This is like the marriage of the sun, which made the frogs murmur. I have been but three days at Versailles, and already I wish myself out of it."

From Fontainebleau, September 17, after the marriage: "Two noblemen died to-night. Assuredly, both of them took their time ill; for in the midst of all the hullabaloo of the king's marriage, their deaths made not the least sensation. . . . Every one here is enchanted with the

queen's goodness and politeness. The first thing she did after her marriage was to distribute among the princesses and ladies of the palace all the magnificent trifles which they call her *casket*, consisting of jewels of every kind except diamonds. When she saw the casket wherein they were placed she said, 'This is the first time in my life that I have been able to make presents.' She had on a little rouge on her wedding-day—as much as was necessary to keep her from looking pale. She fainted a moment in the chapel, but only for form's sake. There was comedy the same day. I had prepared a little divertisement, which M. de Mortemart [first gentleman] was not willing to have executed. They gave in its place 'Amphitryon' and Molière's '*Le Médecin Malgré Lui*,' which did not seem too suitable. After supper there were fireworks of very little ingenuity or variety. . . . For the rest, there is a confusion here, a pressure, a tumult, that are frightful. During these first days of hubbub I shall avoid having myself presented to the queen. I shall wait until the crowd has subsided, and her majesty has recovered a little from the bewilderment caused by all this *sabbat*. Then I shall try to have '*Œdipe*' and '*Mariamne*' played before her. I shall dedicate both to her; and she has already sent me word that she would be very willing I should take that liberty. The King and Queen of Poland—for here we no more recognize King Augustus—have sent to ask me for the poem of 'Henry IV.,' which the queen has already heard spoken of with eulogium. But nothing must be pressed."

Writing to Madame de Bernières on October 8, he says: "I have not a moment to myself. We have had to perform '*Œdipe*,' '*Mariamne*,' and '*L'Indiscret*.' I have been some time at Belébat with Madame de Prie. Besides that, I have been almost always in agitation, cursing the life of a courtier, vainly chasing a little good fortune which seemed to present itself to me, and which fled as soon as I thought I had it; in ill-humor, and not daring to show it; seeing many ridiculous things, and not daring to speak of them; not ill with the queen; much in favor with Madame de Prie—and all that doing nothing for me, except making me lose my time and keeping me from you. . . . Oh, madame, I am not in my element here. Have pity upon a poor man who has abandoned his country for a foreign land. Insensate that I am! In two days I set out to see King Stanislaus; for there is no folly of which I am incapable."

To his friend Thieriot, a week later: "I have had the folly to abandon my talents and my friends for the illusions of the court, for expectations purely imaginary. . . . I have been very well received here by the queen. She has shed tears at the performance of '*Mariamne*,' and she has laughed at '*L'Indiscret*.' She speaks to me frequently; she calls me 'My poor Voltaire.' A fool would be content with all that; but unfortunately I have sense enough to feel that praise is of small account, that the role of a poet at court has always something in it a little ridiculous, and that it is not permitted to any one to be in this country of ours without some kind of status. Every day they give me

hopes, which yield me little nourishment. You would hardly believe, my dear Thieriot, how tired I am of my court life. Henry IV. is very foolishly sacrificed to the court of Louis XV. I mourn the moments which I take away from him. The poor child already ought to have appeared in quarto, on fine paper, with a fair margin and handsome type. That will surely be done this winter, whatever happens. Epic poetry is my forte, or I am much deceived. . . . . All the poets in the world, I believe, have come together at Fontainebleau. The queen is every day assassinated with Pindaric odes, sonnets, epistles, and marriage songs. I imagine she takes the poets for the court fools; and if so she is very right, for it is a great folly for a man of letters to be here, where he neither gives nor receives pleasure."

The fluctuating relations between Frederick the Great and Voltaire have been described. Here are one or two letters written in the first flush of enthusiasm. This is to his friend Count d'Argental dated September, 1750:

"I find a port after thirty years of storms. I find the protection of a king, the conversation of a philosopher, the agreeable qualities of an amiable man, all united in one who for sixteen years has wished to console me for my misfortunes, and put me in security against my enemies. Everything is to be feared for me in Paris as long as I live, notwithstanding my places and the goodness even of the king. Here, I am sure of a destiny forever tranquil. If one can be sure of anything, it is of the character of the King of Prussia. I was formerly

much put out with him on account of a French officer, condemned cruelly by the king's father, whose pardon I had asked. I did not know that this favor had been accorded. The King of Prussia does very noble actions without notifying his people. He has just sent fifty thousand francs in a very pretty little casket to an old lady of the court, whom his father had condemned to a punishment entirely in the Turkish style. This ancient despotic wrong of the late king was spoken of again some time ago; he was unwilling either to show disrespect to the memory of his father or to allow the injustice to remain. He chose an estate of that lady as the scene of a sham-fight of ten thousand troops—a kind of spectacle worthy of the conqueror of Austria. He pretended that during the exercises a hedge had been cut down on the land of the lady in question. Not a twig of it had been laid low; but he persisted in saying that damage had been done, and sent the fifty thousand francs to repair it. My dear and honored friend, how then are great men constituted, if this man is not one?"

A week or two later he writes to his niece. "He is as amiable as you are. He is a king, I grant; but it is a passion of sixteen years; he has turned my head. I have had the insolence to think that nature made me for him. I have found a conformity so singular between all his tastes and mine that I have forgotten he is sovereign of one half of Germany, while the other trembles at his name; that he has gained five battles; that he is the greatest general in Europe; that he is surrounded by big

devils of heroes six feet high. . . . You other Parisians think that I am in Lapland; know that we have had a summer as warm as yours, that we have eaten good peaches and good muscat pears, and that for three or four degrees of the sun, more or less, you must not look down upon people."

Jean Jacques Rousseau had come into prominence by his essay on the question, "Has the Restoration of the Sciences Contributed to Purify or to Corrupt Manners?" This he followed up with a "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality," in which he advocated the return to nature, and he sent a copy to Voltaire. The following interesting correspondence resulted. The first letter is from Voltaire, August 30, 1755:

"I have received, monsieur, your new book against the human race. I thank you for it. You will please men, to whom you tell truths which concern them, but you will not correct them. One could not paint in stronger colors the horrors of human society, from which our ignorance and our weakness expect so many consolations. No one has ever employed so much intellect in the attempt to prove us beasts. A desire seizes us to walk on four paws when we read your work. Nevertheless, as it is more than sixty years since I lost the habit, I feel, unfortunately, that it is impossible for me to resume it, and I leave that natural mode of walking to those who are more worthy of it than you and I. Nor can I embark to go among the savages of Canada: first, because the maladies with which I am afflicted retain me near the greatest physician

in Europe, and I should not find the same succors among the Missouris; secondly, because war has broken out in that country, and the example of our nations has rendered the savages almost as wicked as we are. I limit myself to be a peaceful savage in the solitude which I have chosen in your country, where you ought to be.

"I agree with you that literature and the sciences have sometimes been the cause of much evil. The enemies of Tasso rendered his life a tissue of misfortunes; those of Galileo made him groan in prison at the age of seventy years for having known the motion of the earth, and, what was more shameful, they compelled him to retract. No sooner had your friends begun the '*Dictionnaire Encyclopédique*' than those who presumed to be their rivals called them deists, atheists, and even Jansenists.

"If I dared to reckon myself among those whose labors have been recompensed by persecution alone, I could show you men in a rage to destroy me, from the day that I gave the tragedy of '*Œdipe*'; I should show you a library of ridiculous calumnies printed against me; an ex-Jesuit priest, whom I saved from capital punishment, paying me by defamatory libels for the service which I had rendered him; I should show you a man, still more culpable, printing my own work upon the 'Age of Louis XIV.,' with notes, in which the most brutal ignorance poured forth the most infamous impostures; . . . . I should show you society infected with this kind of men, unknown to all antiquity, who, not being able to embrace

an honest calling, whether that of workman or of lackey, and knowing, unfortunately, how to read and write, become courtiers of literature, live upon our works, steal manuscripts, disfigure them, and sell them; . . . . I should paint you ingratitude, imposture, and rapine pursuing me for forty years, even to the foot of the Alps, even to the brink of my tomb: But what shall I conclude from all those tribulations? That I ought not to complain; that Pope, Descartes, Bayle, Camoens, and a hundred others have experienced the same injustice, and greater; that this destiny is that of almost all those whom the love of letters has too powerfully influenced.

"Confess, monsieur, that these are trifling private misfortunes, which the community scarcely perceives. What does it matter to the human race that some hornets pillage the honey of some bees? Men of letters make a great noise about all these little quarrels; the rest of the world does not know them, or laughs at them.

"Of all the bitternesses spread over human life these are the least fatal. The thorns attached to literature and to the reputation which it gives are nothing but flowers compared with other evils which, in all times, have overwhelmed the earth. Admit that neither Cicero, nor Varro, nor Lucretius, nor Virgil, nor Horace had the least share in the proscriptions. Marius was an ignorant man; the barbarous Sulla, the debauched Antony, the imbecile Lepidus, read little of Plato and Socrates; and as to that tyrant without courage, Octavius Cepias, surnamed so unworthily Augustus, he was

a detestable assassin only while he was deprived of the society of men of letters.

"Confess that Petrarch and Boccaccio did not cause the intestine troubles of Italy; confess that the badinage of Marot did not cause the massacres of St Bartholomew, nor the tragedy of 'The Cid' the troubles of the Fronde. Great crimes have seldom been committed except by celebrated ignoramuses. That which makes, and will always make, of this world a vale of tears is the insatiable cupidity and the indomitable pride of men, from Thamas Koulikhan, who did not know how to read, to a clerk of the tax office, who knows only how to cipher. Literature nourishes the soul, rectifies it, consoles it; it was of service to you, monsieur, at the time when you wrote against it. You are like Achilles, who inveighed against glory, and like Father Malebranche, whose brilliant imagination wrote against imagination.

"If any one ought to complain of literature, it is myself, since at all times and in all places it has served to persecute me; but we must love it, despite the abuse which is made of it, as we must love society, the agreeableness of which is corrupted by so many wicked men; as we must love our country, whatever injustice we suffer in it; as we must love and serve the Supreme Being, notwithstanding the superstitions and the fanaticism which so often dishonor His worship.

"M. Chappuis informs me that your health is very bad; you should come to re-establish it in your native air, to enjoy liberty, to drink with me the milk of our cows, and browse our herbs.

I am very philosophically, and with the most tender esteem," etc.

Rousseau's reply is dated September 10, 1755:

"It is for me to thank you, monsieur, in all regards. In offering you the draught of my sad reveries, I did not think to make you a present worthy of you, but to acquit myself of a duty, and to render you an act of homage which we all owe you as our chief. Sensible, also, of the honor which you do my country, I share the gratitude of my fellow-citizens; and I hope that it will be only augmented when they shall have profited by the instructions you can give them. Adorn the asylum which you have chosen; enlighten a people worthy of your lessons; and you, who know so well how to paint virtue and liberty, teach us to cherish them within our walls, as we do in your writings. All that approaches you ought to learn from you the path to glory.

"You see that I do not aspire to make men return to the condition of beasts, although I regret much, for my part, the little I have lost of that condition. With regard to you, monsieur, such a return would be a miracle, at once so great and so injurious that it would belong to God alone to perform it and to the devil alone to desire it. Do not try, then, to fall upon four paws; no one in the world would less succeed in the attempt than you. You set us up too well upon our two feet for you to cease to stand upon yours.

"I admit all the infamies which pursue men celebrated in literature; I even admit all the evils attached to humanity, which seem independent of

our vain knowledge. Men have opened upon themselves so many sources of misery that when chance diverts some one of them they are scarcely less inundated. There are, besides, in the progress of things, some concealed chains of cause and effect which people in general do not perceive, but which will not escape the eye of the sage who is willing to reflect upon them. It was neither Terence, nor Cicero, nor Seneca, nor Virgil, nor Tacitus, it was neither the men of learning nor the poets, who produced the misfortunes of Rome and the crimes of the Romans; but without the poison, slow and secret, which corrupted, little by little, the most vigorous government of which history makes mention, neither Cicero, nor Lucretius, nor Sallust would have existed; or, if they had existed, they would not have written. The amiable age of Lelius and Terence was the remote origin of the brilliant ages of Augustus and Horace, and, at last, of the horrible ages of Seneca and Nero, of Domitian and Martial. The taste for literature and the arts springs in a people from an inward vice which that taste augments. And if it is true that all kinds of human progress are pernicious in their own way, those of the mind and knowledge, which increase our pride and multiply our errors, directly promote our unhappiness. But there comes a time when the unhappiness of man is such that the very causes which have created it are necessary to prevent its increase: the sword must be left in the wound, lest the wounded man expire in drawing it out.

"As to myself, if I had followed my first voca-

tion, and if I had neither read nor written, I should doubtless have been happier. Nevertheless, if letters were now annihilated, I should be deprived of the only pleasure which remains to me. It is in the bosom of literature that I find consolation for all my ills; it is among those who cultivate it that I taste the sweets of friendship, and learn to enjoy life without fearing death. I owe to it the little that I am; I owe to it even the honor of being known to you. But let us consult our interests in our business, and truth in our writings. Although philosophers, historians, scholars, are necessary to enlighten the world and lead its blind inhabitants, if the sage 'Memnon' has told me the truth, I know nothing so silly as a people of sages.

. . . . "If we explore the original source of the disorders of society, we shall find that all the evils from which men suffer come to them through error much more than through ignorance, and that what we do not know at all injures us much less than what we think we know. Now, what surer means of running from error to error than the rage to know everything? If men had not supposed they knew that the earth did not revolve, they would not have punished Galileo for having said it revolved. If philosophers alone had claimed the title of philosopher, the Encyclopedia would have had no persecutor. If a hundred myrmidons did not aspire to glory, you would enjoy yours in peace; or, at least, you would have only rivals worthy of you.

"Do not then be surprised to feel some thorns inseparable from the flowers which crown great

talents. The assaults of your enemies are the satirical acclamations which follow triumphal processions. It is the eagerness of the public for all your writings which produces the thefts of which you complain; but it is not easy to interpolate them, for neither iron nor lead will blend with gold. Permit me to say to you, from the interest which I take in your repose and in our instruction, despise the vain clamors by which it is less sought to do you harm than to prevent your doing good. The more you are criticised the more reason you should give us to admire you. A good book is a terrible response to printed attacks; and who will dare to attribute to you works you did not write, as long as you write only inimitable ones?

"I am grateful for your invitation, and if this winter leaves me in a condition to go in the spring to dwell in my native land, I shall avail myself of your goodness; but I should like better to drink the water of your fountain than the milk of your cows; and, as to the herbs of your garden, I believe I should find in it only the lotus, which is not the food of beasts, and the moly,[1] which prevents men from becoming beasts."

[1] The herb given to Ulysses to save him from enchantment by Circe.

Fac Simile Letter Written by Voltaire
Urging that Justice Be Done a Persecuted Family

N. 9. 12 Juillet 1766 au Chateau de Ferney 9e Juillet 1766.

Monsieur

Le 9 juillet 1766.

Il Je n'ay pû refuser au Régisseur des biens des réliez fugitifs ~~l'ordre que~~ ~~[illegible]~~ la permission de saisir le domaine d'asservens ; Les ordres royaux Establissent ces ~~[illegible]~~ ces mêmes ordres donnent le tems et la liberté aux agressions, mais ~~les~~ les propriétaires de fournir leurs moyens et ~~la~~ leurs titres pour obtenir le renvoy des demandes mal fondées. Je vous prie de croire Il que j'apporteray toutte l'attention possible à la defense qu'emploiera la famille martin pour sa liberation et que je serois très satisfait de pouvoir assurer bientot sa tranquilité

Je vous demande instamment une grace, et j'ose me flatter que vous me l'accorderez si elle est

(Je suis avec une respectueuse estime)

famille de son bien . vous n'immolerez pas une famille à un procureur . vous réprimerez la vexation et la chicane loin de les encourager . la bonté de vôtre cœur sera touchée de l'état où l'on veut réduire une famille par des allégations trompeuses . j'implore vôtre équité et vôtre generosité .

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec beaucoup de respect

Monsieur

Vôtre très humble et très obéïssant serviteur . voltaire

MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS.

MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS.

ON SPINOZA.

TO HIS HIGHNESS, MONSEIGNEUR, PRINCE OF—

Monseigneur: It seems to me that often the personality of Spinoza has been as badly judged as his works. Here is what is said of him in two historical dictionaries:

"Spinoza had such a desire to immortalize himself that he would willingly have sacrificed to his glory the present life, had it been necessary to be cut to pieces by an enraged mob. The absurdities of Spinozism have been thoroughly refuted by Jean Bredembourg, a citizen of Rotterdam."

In this there are as many mistakes as words. Spinoza was exactly the contrary of the portrait which has been drawn of him. One must detest his atheism, but one should not lie in regard to his personality. Never was a man farther removed in every sense from vainglory, it must be owned; let us not calumniate him in condemning him. Minister Colerus, who lived a long time in the very room where Spinoza died, affirms with all his contemporaries that Spinoza always lived in profound retirement, seeking to withdraw himself from the world and eschewing all superfluity, modest in conversation, careless in dress, working with his hands

and never putting his name to any of his works. This is not the character of a man ambitious of glory. With regard to Bredembourg, far from refuting Spinoza very well, I venture to believe that he refuted him very badly. I have read his work and I leave the judgment of it to whoever, like me, may have the patience to read it. Bredembourg was so far from simply overwhelming Spinoza that he was himself frightened by the weakness of his rejoinders and became the disciple of him whom he had assailed: a notable example of the wretchedness and of the inconstancy of the human mind. The life of Spinoza has been written in sufficient detail, and is well enough known for me not to relate any of it here. This Jew, still young, was ill-treated by the synagogue. Accused by two young persons of his age of not believing in Moses, they began, in order to bring him back into the proper road, by stabbing him with a knife as he was leaving the theatre; some say, as he was leaving the synagogue, which latter is more probable.

After having missed his body, they did not want to miss his soul. They proceeded to the major excommunication, to the grand anathema, to the *chammata*. Spinoza claimed that the Jews were not empowered to exercise this kind of jurisdiction in Amsterdam. The city council referred the decision in this matter to the consistory of pastors and these latter concluded that, if the synagogue had this right, the consistory would possess it in a still higher degree: this consistory decided in favor of the synagogue.

Spinoza was proscribed then by the Jews with

grand ceremony. The Jewish cantor intoned the words of execration. Horns were sounded, inverted black candles were melted drop by drop into a tub full of blood. Benedict Spinoza was devoted to Beelzebub, Satan, and to Astaroth, and all the synagogue cried "Amen." It is strange that this assertion of jurisdiction, which resembled rather a witch's Sabbath than a regular trial, was ever permitted. It may be believed that but for the knife-thrusts and the black candles extinguished in blood, Spinoza never would have written against Moses and against God. Persecution irritates, it emboldens whoever feels genius. It renders irreconcilable him whom indulgence would have checked. Spinoza renounced Judaism but without ever becoming a Christian. He did not publish till 1670, about eight years after his excommunication, his "Treatise on Superstitious Ceremonies," otherwise called "*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus.*" It has been claimed that in this book will be found the seeds of his atheism, in the same way that one always finds an evil physiognomy in a man who has done a base deed. This book is so far removed from atheism that in it Jesus Christ is spoken of as one sent from God. The work is very profound and the best one he ever wrote. I condemn without doubt his sentiments, but I cannot refrain from esteeming his erudition. It was he, it seems to me, who first remarked that the Hebrew word *ruhag,* which we translate *soul,* signified to the Jews "wind," "breath" in its natural sense; that all that is great bore the divine name: the cedar trees of God; the winds of God; the melancholy of Saul, the bad

spirit of God; upright men, as the children of God, etc.

He was the first who developed the dangerous theory of Aben-Ezra that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, nor the book of Joshua by Joshua, and it was not till after him that Leclerc, the celebrated Newton and various Dutch theologians embraced this view. Newton differed from him only in this: that he attributed Moses' book to Samuel, whereas Spinoza made Ezra the author. In the eighth, ninth, and tenth chapters can be seen all the reasons which Spinoza gives for his system. The chronology there has been found to be very exact; great knowledge of the history, speech, and the customs of his people; more method and reason than in all the rabbins together. It seems to me that few writers before him had proved clearly that the Jews recognized prophets among the Gentiles. In a word, he made a culpable use of his information, but he made a very great one. In the ancient philosophers it is necessary to search for atheism. It is not found clearly revealed except in the posthumous works of Spinoza. His "Treatise on Atheism" not being under this title and having been written in obscure Latin and in very dry style, Count Boulainvilliers translated it into French under the title of "Spinoza's Refutation." We have only the venom. Boulainvilliers apparently had not the time to give the antidote.

Few people have remarked that Spinoza in his dire book speaks of an infinite and supreme being. He announces God while he wishes to destroy Him. The arguments with which Bayle overwhelms him

would appear to me irrefragable if Spinoza actually admitted a God; for this God, being only the immensity of things, at the same time both matter and thought, it is absurd, as Bayle has very well proved, to suppose that God is at the same time the actor and the receiver, cause and effect, doing evil and suffering it, loving Himself, hating Himself, killing Himself, consuming Himself. A good spirit, adds Bayle, would prefer to cultivate the earth with his teeth and nails to cultivating an hypothesis so shocking and absurd, for, according to Spinoza, those who say "the Germans have killed 10,000 Turks" speak badly and falsely; they should say "God, under the form of 10,000 Germans, has killed God, appearing under the form of 10,000 Turks."

Bayle is very right if Spinoza acknowledges a God, but the fact is that he does not acknowledge one at all, and that he has only made use of this sacred word in order not to frighten men too much. Influenced by Descartes, he makes improper use of Descartes' equally celebrated and senseless expression: "Give me motion and matter and I will form a world." Possessed further by the incomprehensible and antiphysical idea that everything is complete, he has imagined that there can exist only a single substance, a sole power which reasons in men, feels and remembers in the case of animals, sparkles in the fire, flows in the water, is borne along with the wind, rumbles in the thunder, vegetates on earth and extends throughout all space. According to him, everything is necessary; everything is eternal. Creation is impossible; no design

in the structure of the universe, in the permanence of species, in the sensation of individuals. The ears are not made to hear, the eyes to see, the heart to receive and put in motion the blood, the stomach to digest, the brain to think, the organs of generation to give life, and the divine intentions are nothing but the effects of a blind necessity. This, in brief, is the system of Spinoza. Here, I think, are the points at which his citadel must be attacked —a citadel built, if I am not mistaken, on ignorance of physics and on the most monstrous abuse of metaphysics.

It seems, and one must flatter himself with the fact, that there are to-day few atheists. The author of "*La Henriade*" has said that a catechism announces God to children and Newton demonstrates Him to sages. The more nature is known the more its author is adored. Atheism cannot benefit morality and may do it a good deal of harm. It is almost as dangerous as fanaticism. You are, Monseigneur, equally removed from both, and that is what authorizes the liberty which I have taken to place the truth before your gaze without any disguise. I have replied to all your questions, extending from the learned buffoon, Rabelais, to the rash metaphysician, Spinoza. I might have been able to add to this list a large number of little books which are scarcely known except to librarians, but I have feared that in multiplying the number of culpable ones, I might seem to diminish their iniquity. I hope that the little I have said will strengthen your highness in your sympathy for our dogmas and our writings, and that you will see that they have

not been combated except by stubborn stoics, by savants puffed up with their science, by the worldly minded who only know their vain reasoning, by jesters who take witticism for arguments; by theologians, in short, who, instead of walking in the ways of God, allow themselves to wander off into their own ways. Once more, allow me to say that what must console a mind as noble as yours is the fact that atheism which ruins to-day so many souls can never hurt either the peace of states or the polish of society. Controversy has everywhere caused blood to flow and atheism has staunched it. It is a bad remedy, I avow it, but it has healed the most cruel wounds. It is excellent for this life; it is detestable for the life to come. It surely condemns its believer, but it renders him peaceable. Your country was formerly aflame for arguments; atheism brought it harmony. It is clear that if Poltrot, Jacques Clément, Jaurigni, Balthazar Gérard, Jean Châtel, Damiens, the Jesuit Malagrida, and others, had been atheists, there would have been fewer princes assassinated. God forbid that I should be willing to prefer atheism to the sacred religion of the Ravaillacs, the Damiens, the Malagridas, which they have ignored, and I say only that it is more agreeable to live with the atheists than with the Ravaillacs and the Brinvilliers who go to confession, and if your highness is not of my opinion, I am wrong.

ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

We have to examine into that which is called the faculty of thinking in the different species of mankind. We are to investigate how their ideas come, whether there is a soul distinct from the body, whether this soul is immortal, whether it is free, has virtues, vices, etc., but most of these ideas have a dependence on the existence or the non-existence of a God. It is necessary, I believe, to commence by sounding the depth of this great principle. Let us divest ourselves here more than ever of all passion and prejudice, and in good faith let us see what our reason can teach us regarding this question: Is there a God or not? In the first place, I remark that there are peoples who have no knowledge of a Creator; these, in truth, are barbarians and few in number; still, they are men, and if the knowledge of God is necessary to human nature, the wild Hottentots would have as sublime an idea as we of a Supreme Being. Furthermore, there is not, among civilized peoples, any child which has the least conception of a God. Such an idea is inculcated with difficulty. Children pronounce the word "God" often throughout their lives without attaching to it any fixed notion; you see, moreover, that ideas of God differ as much among men as their religions and their laws, and hereupon I cannot refrain from indulging in this reflection: is it possible that the knowledge of a God, our creator, our preserver, our all, is less necessary to man than a nose and five fingers? All men are born with a nose and five fingers, but no one is born with a knowledge

of God. Whether that is deplorable or not, such is certainly the condition of humanity. Let us see if we acquire in time the knowledge of God just as we arrive at mathematical notions and some metaphysical conceptions. What can we do better, in a research so important, than to weigh what can be said *pro* and *contra;* than to decide in favor of what appears to us more conformable to our reason?

SUMMARY OF THE REASONS IN FAVOR OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

There are two ways of arriving at a notion of a being who presides over the universe. The most natural, the most perfect for common capacities is to consider not only the order which is in the universe, but also the end to which each thing seems to correspond. Many stout volumes have been composed on this single idea and all these stout volumes together contain nothing more than this argument: When I see a watch whose hand marks the hours, I conclude that an intelligent being has arranged the springs of this machine in order that the hand may mark the hour. Thus, when I see the springs of the human body, I conclude that an intelligent being has arranged these organs in order that they may be received and nourished nine months in the womb; that the eyes are given for seeing, the hands for seizing, etc., but from this sole argument I cannot conclude anything further than that it is probable that an intelligent and superior being has skilfully prepared and fashioned the matter. I cannot conclude from

that alone that this being has made matter out of nothing and that he is infinite in every sense. In vain do I seek in my mind the connection of these ideas: *it is probable that I am the work of a being more powerful than I;* therefore, this being has existed from all eternity; has created everything, is infinite, etc. I do not see the chain which leads straight to this conclusion. I see only that there is something more powerful than I, and beyond this, nothing.

The second argument is more metaphysical, less likely to be seized by coarse minds, and leads to much vaster conceptions. Here is a synopsis of them:

I exist, hence something exists. If something exists, then something has existed from all eternity, for that which exists either exists of itself or has received its being from another. If it exists through itself, it exists necessarily; it has always existed necessarily and this is God. If it has received its being from another, and this second one from a third, that from which this last has received its being must necessarily be God. For you cannot conceive that one being gives being to another if he has not the power to create. Furthermore, if you say that a thing receives its existence (I do not say form) from another thing, and that other thing from a third, this third from another yet, and thus going back even to infinity, you state an absurdity. All these beings, then, would have no cause of their existence. Taken altogether they have no external cause for their existence; each taken in particular, they have no internal cause:

that is to say, taken altogether, they owe their existence to nothing; taken each one in particular, no one exists through itself; then no one can exist necessarily. I am, then, reduced to avowing that there is a being which has existed necessarily through himself from all eternity and who has originated all other beings. Hence, it follows, essentially that this being is infinite in duration, immensity and power, for who can bound him? "But," you will say to me, "the material world is precisely this being which we are looking for." Let us investigate in good faith if the thing is possible. If this material world is existent through itself from an absolute necessity, it is a contradiction in terms to suppose that the least part of this universe can exist otherwise than of itself, for if it exists at this moment from an absolute necessity, this word alone excludes every other manner of existence. For certainly this table on which I am writing, this pen which I am using have not always been what they are; these thoughts which I trace on the paper did not even exist a moment ago; therefore, they do not exist of necessity. Now, if each part does not exist from absolute necessity, it is impossible that the whole exists of itself. I produce motion; hence, the motion was not in existence before; hence, the motion is not essential to matter and the matter received it from without, and there is a God which gave it. Likewise, intelligence is not essential to matter, for a rock or a grain of wheat does not think. From whom, then, is it likely that these parts of matter which think and feel have received sensation and thought? It cannot be from

themselves, since they feel in spite of themselves; it cannot be from matter in general, since thought and sensation are not essential to matter. They have, therefore, received these gifts from the hand of a Supreme Being, intelligent, infinite and the originating cause of all beings.

The foregoing are in substance the proofs of the existence of a God and the synopsis of several volumes—a synopsis which each reader can amplify as he wishes.

The following, with the same brevity, are the objections which can be raised to this system:

1. If God is not this material world, He created it or He gave to some other being the power to create it, which amounts to the same thing, but in making this world He either produced it from nothing or from His own divine nature. He cannot have made it out of mere nothing. He cannot have produced it from Himself since this world in this case would be essentially part of the divine essence; therefore I must not admit creation.

2. God might have made this world either from necessity or from choice. If He made it from necessity, He must have always been under the obligation of making it, for this necessity is eternal; therefore, in this case, the world would be eternal and created, which involves a contradiction. If God made it freely from pure choice without any antecedent reason, that is another contradiction, for it is contradictory to suppose a being infinitely wise making everything without any determining reason, and a being infinitely powerful having existed

through eternity without making the least use of his power.

3. If it appears to most men that an intelligent being has impressed the seal of his wisdom on all nature and that each thing seems to be made for a certain end, it is still more true in the eyes of philosophers that everything is created in nature by the eternal, independent, and immutable laws of mathematics; the construction and the duration of the human body are the result of the equilibrium of fluids and of the force of levers. The more we learn of the structure of the universe, the more closely we see it is in conformity with the laws of mathematics, from the stars to the smallest mote. It is, therefore, permissible to believe that these laws having operated by their nature, the results are necessary effects which are taken for the arbitrary determinations of an intelligent power. For example, a field produces grass because such is the nature of its soil moistened by the rain, and not because there are horses which have need of hay.

4. If the arrangement of this world's parts and all that takes place among the beings which have sentient life—if all this proves the existence of a creator and a master—it would more strongly prove the rule of a barbarous being; for the admission of final causes will compel one to say that God, infinitely wise and infinitely good, has given life to all creatures in order that they may be devoured by one another. In fact, if we consider all the animals, it will be seen that each species has an irresistible instinct which forces it to destroy another species.

In regard to human miseries, there is room to

reproach the divinity throughout our lives. It is no answer to say that the wisdom and goodness of God are not fashioned like ours: this argument would have no weight in the minds of many people who reply that they can only judge of justice by the idea which they assume God has given them of it; that one can only measure with the measure which He has furnished, and that it is as impossible for us not to regard as barbarous, a being who would conduct himself as a barbarous man, as it is impossible for us to believe that no being whatsoever is six feet high, when we have measured one and found it to be that height.

If we are told that our measure is faulty, we shall be told a thing which seems to involve contradiction, for it is God Himself who gave us this false idea; therefore, God will have made us only in order to deceive us. Now, this is saying that a being who is absolute perfection plunges his creatures into error which is, strictly speaking, the sole imperfection: this is plainly a contradiction. Finally, the materialists will conclude by saying: "We have fewer absurdities to swallow in the system of atheism than in that of deism, for on the one hand, it is necessary to the truth that we conceive as eternal and infinite this world which we can see, but on the other, it is necessary for us to imagine a being infinite and eternal and that we add to it the creation of which we can have no conception. It is, therefore, easier for us, they will conclude, "not to believe in a God than it is to believe in Him."

THE FAMILIES OF CALAS AND SIRVEN.

AN ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC UPON THE PARRICIDES IMPUTED TO THEM.

Here, then, on account of religion, in one year in France are two accusations of parricide and two families legally sacrificed by fanaticism.

The same fanaticism that stretched Calas upon the wheel at Toulouse dragged to the gallows the whole family of Sirven, in a jurisdiction of the same province; and the same defender of innocence, M. Elias de Beaumont, advocate of the Parliament of Paris, who justified Calas, has also justified the Sirvens, by a memorial signed by several advocates —a memorial which demonstrates that the sentence pronounced against the Sirvens is still more absurd than the arret against the Calas family.

This, in a few words, is the fact, the recital of which may serve to instruct those who cannot obtain a copy of the eloquent address of M. de Beaumont.

In the year one thousand seven hundred and sixty-one, at the very time that the Protestant family of Calas were in fetters, accused with having assassinated Marc Antony Calas, who it was supposed, was desirous of embracing the Catholic religion, it happened that a daughter of the said Paul Sirven, commissary at Terrier, in the country of Castres, was presented to the bishop of Castres by a woman, who had the management of his house. The bishop, being informed that this girl was of a Calvinist family, shut her up in a kind of convent

at Castres, called the house of the Regents. This young girl was flogged into a knowledge of the Catholic religion, and this discipline was so severely bestowed upon her, that she became insane. Having escaped from her confinement, she threw herself into a well, in the middle of the country, at a great distance from her father's house, near a village called Mazamet. Hereupon the village justice reasoned thus: "At Toulouse, Calas will be broken upon the wheel, and his wife burned, who have doubtless destroyed their son, to prevent his going to mass: I should therefore, according to the example of my superiors, do as much upon this occasion to the Sirvens, who have, doubtless, drowned their daughter for the same cause.

"It is true I have no proof that the father, mother, and two sisters of this girl have assassinated her; but I have heard that there is no more proof against Calas and his family, so I run no risk. It would, perhaps, be too much for a country justice to break people upon the wheel and burn them; but I shall, at least, have the pleasure of arresting a whole Huguenot family, and shall be paid for my trouble out of the confiscated effects."

For his greater security, this religious fanatic had the corpse examined by a doctor as ignorant of medicine as he was of jurisprudence. The doctor, quite astonished at not finding the girl's stomach filled with water, and not being aware that it is impossible for water to enter a body from which the air cannot issue, concluded that the girl had been knocked on the head, and afterwards thrown into the well.

A devotee in the neighborhood affirmed that this was the practice in all Protestant families.

At length, after many proceedings, as irregular as the reasoning was absurd, the justice decreed that the father, mother, and sisters of the deceased should be apprehended.

At this news Sirven convenes his friends. They are all convinced of his innocence; but the affair of Calas filled the whole province with terror. They advise Sirven not to expose himself to the madness of fanaticism. He flies with his wife and daughters at an inclement season. This unhappy band are compelled to cross on foot mountains covered with snow; one of the daughters of Sirven, who had been married about a year, is brought to-bed upon the ice. Dying as she is, she is forced to carry her expiring infant in her arms.

The first news that at length reaches this family upon their arrival in a place of safety is, that the father and mother are condemned to death, and the two sisters, declared equally culpable, to perpetual banishment; that their estate is confiscated; and that they have nothing left in this world but opprobium and misery.

This may be seen more at length in the excellent report of M. de Beaumont, which contains complete proofs of the purest innocence and of the most detestable injustice.

Providence, which allowed that the first attempts which produced the justification of Calas, who died upon the wheel in Languedoc, should come from the extremity of the mountains and neighboring parts of Switzerland, hath again been pleased that

the vindication of the Sirvens should issue from the same solitude.

The children of Calas took refuge there, the family of Sirven there sought an asylum at the same time. Sympathizing and truly religious men, who have had the consolation of serving these two unfortunate families, and who pitied their disasters and respected their virtues, could not then present petitions for the Sirvens, as they could for the others, because the criminal prosecutions against the Sirvens proceeded more slowly, and continued longer.

And, afterwards, how could a wandering family, four hundred miles distant from their country, recover the necessary proofs for their justification?

What was to be done by a father overwhelmed with misery, a dying wife, whose grief had, in fact, nearly destroyed her, and two daughters, as unfortunate as their father and mother?

It was necessary to legally require a copy of the proceedings against them. Forms, perhaps necessary, but whose effect is often to oppress the innocent and wretched, would not allow it. Their intimidated relatives did not dare write to them. All that this family could learn in a foreign country was, that they were condemned to death at home. Were it known with what care and difficulty some judicial proofs were extracted in their favor, it would be pitiful.

By what kind of fatality has it become so easy to oppress, and so difficult to succor?

The same forms of justice could not be used for the Sirvens which had been employed by the family

of Calas, because the latter had been condemned by a parliament, and the Sirvens had been tried only by subordinate judges, from whom an appeal lay to the same parliament.

We shall not repeat anything that has been said by the eloquent and generous M. de Beaumont; but having considered how closely these two occurrences are united with the interests of mankind, we believe it is for the same interest to attack at its source the fanaticism which produced them.

In the present instance, the subjects are only two obscure families; but when the most unknown creature dies of a contagion which hath long desolated the earth, it is a declaration to the world that the fatal disorder still exists. All men should therefore be upon their guard; and skilled physicians should be employed to discover remedies for abating the devastating pestilence.

Perhaps the forms or jurisprudence may not allow the petition of the Sirvens to gain access to the King of France or his council—but it has been received by the people—and the people—the judge of all judges—will render a just decision.

FANATICISM.

Human nature hath ever been susceptible of errors; but these have not constantly been homicides. We may have been ignorant that the earth revolved around the sun; we may have believed in fortune-tellers; we may have given credit to the prognostics of birds; have thought that serpents

were enchanted; that parti-colored animals might by produced by displaying to the mothers objects of different hues; we may have been persuaded that in the declension of the moon the marrow of the bones diminishes; that corn must rot to grow, etc. But such kinds of folly have not, at least, produced persecution, discord, or murders.

Other species of madness have disturbed the earth, and given vent to a deluge of blood. We are not sufficiently acquainted, for instance, with the number of wretches that have been delivered up to the executioner by ignorant judges, who quietly and without scruple condemned them to the flames upon an accusation of sorcery.

There has not been a single tribunal in Christendom, that has not often been polluted with such judicial assassinations during the last fifteen hundred centuries; and when I assert that there have been amongst the Christians upwards of one hundred thousand victims to this idiotic and barbarous jurisprudence, and that the greater part of them were innocent girls and women, I do not charge the account high enough.

Libraries are crammed with books relative to the laws of witchcraft; all the decisions of these judges are founded upon the examples of the magicians of Pharaoh, the witch of Endor, persons possessed, who are mentioned in the Evangelists, and the apostles expressly sent to exorcise people possessed of devils.

No one dared aver that God, through pity for the human race, might formerly have suffered possessions and sorcery, and not allow them at present.

Such a distinction would have appeared to them criminal—victims were absolutely necessary. Christianity was always defiled with such absurd barbarity.

All the fathers of the church believed in magic. Upwards of fifty councils pronounced anathemas against those who made devils enter into men's bodies by virtue of words.

The universal error was sacred. Statesmen, who might have disabused the people, did not think it necessary. They were too much immersed in the torrent of business, and were afraid of the power of prejudice.

They saw that this fanaticism sprang from the bosom of religion itself, and they did not dare strike this unnatural child for fear of wounding its ancient mother—they rather chose to expose themselves to the slavery of popular error than to bravely combat it.

Princes and kings have paid dearly for deceiving the people and encouraging the superstition of the vulgar. Were not the people of Paris taught to believe that King Henry III. used sorcery in his devotions? and were not magical operations long in use to rob him of his unhappy life, whose thread was more surely cut by the knife of a Jacobin, than if all the satanic powers had been conjured up by sorcery?

Did not fanatics wish to conduct Martha Brossier, who was possessed, to Rome, to accuse Henry IV. in the name of the devil, of not being a good Catholic? Each year, in those half-savage times

we are speaking of, was checkered with such adventures.

Did not all that remained of the League at Paris promulgate the rumor that the devil had wrung the handsome Gabrielle d'Estrées' neck?

We should not, it is now said, bring forth to view these histories, so shocking to human nature; and I say, that we should repeat them a thousand times, that they may be constantly present to the public mind.

We should remember that the unfortunate priest Urban Grandier was condemned to the flames by ignorant judges, to gratify a blood-thirsty minister.

Grandier's innocence was evident; but some nuns declared he had bewitched them, and this was enough. God was forgotten to speak only of the devil.

It necessarily happened that the commerce between men and devils being by the priests made articles of faith, and the judges considering this imaginary crime as real and frequent as theft, we found among us more sorcerers than robbers.

EVIL JURISPRUDENCE.

Our rituals and jurisprudence, founded upon the decree of Gratian, were what, in fact, laid the ground-work of magic. A weak people give the alarm, our fathers excommunicated and exorcised those who entered into compacts with the devil, and our judges burned them. It is, therefore, very certain that bargains may be made with the devil.

Now, if these bargains are secretly made, and Beelzebub keeps his word with us, we may be enriched in a single night. It is only necessary for us to go to the nocturnal meeting; and the fear of being discovered should not preponderate over our hopes of the infinite good the devil can do us. Besides, Beelzebub, being more powerful than our justices, he may secure us against them.

Thus reasoned these wretches, and the more fagots that were lighted by fanatical judges, the more idiots were found to brave them.

But there were besides more accusers than criminals. Was a girl with child without her lover being known, it was the devil that had seduced her. Did some husbandmen obtain by their industry a more plentiful harvest than their neighbors, it was because they were sorcerers; and the inquisition burned them, and sold their estates for its emolument.

The Pope delegated throughout all Germany and elsewhere judges who gave up innocent victims to the secular power, so that laymen were for a long time only catch polls and executioners for the priests. It is still the same in Portugal and Spain.

In proportion as a ruler remained ignorant and barbarous, the dominion of the devil was acknowledged. We have a collection of the arrets that were issued in Franche-Comté, against the sorcerers, which was published in 1607, by a chief judge of St. Claude, named Boguet, with the approbation of several bishops.

If a man were to write such a book at present, he would be sent to Bedlam: but at that time all

the other judges were equally cruel and ignorant. Each province had a like register.

In a word, when philosophy began to dawn among men, the persecution of witches ceased; and they are no longer visible upon the earth.

FREE TOLERATION.

What a dreadful passion is that pride which would force men to think like ourselves! But is it not the height of folly to think of bringing them to our dogmas by making them continually revolt at the most atrocious calumnies—by persecutions dragging them to the galleys, to the gibbet, to the wheel, and to the flaming pile?

An Irish priest has lately stated in a pamphlet he has written, but which has remained unknown, that he has heard others assert that we have come a hundred years too late to raise our voices against the want of toleration—that barbarity has taken the place of gentleness, and that this is not the time to complain.

I shall reply to those who speak in this manner: Observe what passes under your own eyes, and if you have a human heart, you will join your compassion to ours.

Eight unhappy preachers have been hanged in France since the year 1745. The bills of confession have excited infinite trouble; and at length an unhappy fanatic, from the dregs of the people, having attempted to assassinate the king in 1757, he answered before the parliament upon his inter-

rogation,[1] that he had undertaken this parricide through a principle of religion; and he added these fatal words:

"He that does no good but to himself is good for nothing."

By whom was he taught this language? Who could teach a sweeper in a college, a mere valet, to talk thus?[2] He maintained when put to the torture, not only that this assassination was a meritorious deed,[3] but that he had heard all the priests in the great hall of the palace, where justice is administered, say the same.

The contagion of fanaticism then still exists. The virus is so little eradicated, that a priest[4] in the country of Calas and Sirven, printed a few years ago, an "Apology for the Massacre of St. Bartholomew." Another priest[5] has published the "Justification of the Murderers of the Curate Grandier"; and when that useful and humane "Treatise on Toleration" appeared in France, it could not be allowed a public sale.

This "Treatise" has indeed done some good—it has dissipated some prejudices—it has inspired a horror for persecutions and fanaticism; but in this picture of religious barbarities, the author has omitted certain features that would have rendered the picture more terrible and the instruction more striking.

The author has been reproached with going too far, when, in order to display how detestable and fanatical is persecution, he introduces a relative of

---

[1] Damien's Trial, p. 131. [2] Ibid. p. 135. [3] Ibid. p. 405.
[4] The Abbé de Ceiverac. [5] The Abbé de la Menardaye.

Ravaillac proposing to the Jesuit Letellier the confinement of all the Jansenists.

This fiction might, indeed, appear somewhat *outré* to those who are unacquainted with the silly rage of fanaticism. It will appear very surprising, when it is known, that what is a fiction in the "Treatise on Toleration" is now an historical fact.

We, in effect, find in the "History of the Reformation in Switzerland," that in order to prevent the great change that was ready to burst, some priests in Geneva, in 1536, corrupted a servant maid to poison three of the principal actors in the reformation; and the poison administered not having been strong enough, they put some that was more violent in the bread and wine of the public communion, in order to exterminate all those of the reformed religion in a single morning, and to make the Church of God triumph.[1]

The author of the "Treatise on Toleration" has not mentioned the shocking executions wherein so many unhappy victims perished in the valleys of Piedmont. He has passed over in silence the massacre of six hundred inhabitants of Valencia, men, women, and children, who were murdered by the Catholics on a Sunday in the month of September, 1620. I will not say it was with the consent and assistance of the archbishop of Milan, Charles Borome, who was made a saint.

Some passionate writers have averred this fact,

[1] Ruchat, Vol. I. pp. 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7. Roset, Vol. III. p. 13. Savion, Vol, 3, 126. Mess. Chouit. p. 26, with the testimonies of the prosecution.

which I am very far from believing—but I say, there is scarce any city or borough in Europe, where blood has not been spilled for religious quarrels—I say, that the human species has sensibly diminished, because women and girls were massacred as well as men—I say, that Europe would have been one-third better peopled, if there had been no theological disputes. And lastly, I say, that so far from forgetting these abominable times, we should frequently take a view of them; and that it is for our age to make reparation by toleration, for this long series of crimes, which has taken place through the want of toleration, during sixteen barbarous ages.

Let it not then be said, that there are no traces left of that shocking fanaticism—of the want of toleration. Fanatics still abound, and are everywhere to be met with, even in those countries that are esteemed the most humane.

The Lutheran and Calvinist preachers, were they masters, would probably be as little inclined to pity, as obdurate, and as intolerant as they upbraid their antagonists with being. The barbarous law, whereby any Roman Catholic is forbidden to reside more than three days in certain countries is not revoked. An Italian, a Frenchman, or an Austrian, cannot occupy a house, or possess an acre of land in their territories; whilst an unknown citizen of Geneva, or Schaffhausen, is at least allowed to purchase manors in France.

If a Frenchman, on the contrary, wanted to purchase an estate in the Protestant republics of which I am speaking, and if the government wisely winked

at it, there would still be some souls formed of such clods, as to rise up against this spirit of toleration.

ANTI-TOLERATION.

One of the causes of the continuance of the revengeful hatred of citizens against their fellow countrymen of another faith, is that unhappy custom of perpetuating divisions by monuments and festivals. Such is the annual procession at Toulouse, wherein thanks are yearly returned to God for four thousand murders. It has been forbidden by several royal ordinances, but has not yet been abolished. Religion and the throne are annually insulted by this barbarous ceremony; and at the end of a century, the insult is doubly increased with the solemnity.

After the secular games have been celebrated, the City asks a plenary indulgence of the Pope in favor of the Procession. It doubtless stands in great need of indulgence, but cannot deserve it whilst eternizing fanaticism.

The last secular ceremony was observed in 1762, at the very time that Calas was expiring upon the wheel. God was praised on the one hand, and innocence massacred on the other. Will posterity believe to what a height superstition was carried in our time upon this unhappy solemnity?

At first, the cobblers appeared in ceremonial costume carrying the head of the first bishop of Toulouse, and prince of Peloponnesus, who incontestably held the see of Toulouse before the death of Jesus Christ. Then come the tilers, laden with the bones of all the children that Herod put to death

one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years ago; and although these children were buried at Ephesus, like the eleven thousand virgins at Cologne, as all the world can testify, they are nevertheless interred at Toulouse.

The dealers in old clothes display a bit of the virgin's gown, which they take great care of, and which they purchased of a female Jew dealer at the fair of Beaumaire.

The relics of St. Peter and St. Paul are carried by the fraternity of tailors. These probably were the dresses made for them by the habit-maker Dorcas. As to their bodies, it is certain they are at Rome, with their keys.

Thirty dead bodies next pass in review. If these mummeries only were considered, they would be ridiculous and disgusting. But piety deceived is nevertheless piety. The credulous people may, at all events fulfil their duty (especially when the police are vigilant) though they carry in procession the bones of four thousand children, who were put to death by the command of Herod in Bethlehem. But so many dead bodies which upon this occasion serve only to create a remembrance of four hundred citizens who were put to death in 1562, can make but a sad impression upon the minds of the living. Add to this the black and white penitents, who march in this procession, with a cloth mask over their faces, resembling ghosts, and who greatly increase the horror of this doleful spectacle.

The people retire from the exhibition with their heads full of phantoms, their hearts inspired with the spirit of fanaticism, and filled with hatred

against their brethren who were insulted by this procession.

In this manner people formerly came from the Chamber of Meditations amongst the Jesuits. The imagination is inflamed at these objects, and the soul becomes atrocious and implacable.

Unhappy mortals! let your festivals soften your manners, sway you to clemency, gentleness and charity. Celebrate the day of Fontenoy, when all the wounded enemies were carried with our own in the same houses, in the same hospitals—where they were treated with the same care and attention. Celebrate the generosity of the English, who raised a subscription in favor of our prisoners in the last war. Celebrate the benefactions which Louis XV. heaped upon the family of Calas; and let this festival be an eternal reparation to injustice. Celebrate the beneficent and useful institutions of the Invalids, of the young ladies of St. Cyr, of the gentlemen of the military school.

Let your festivals commemorate virtuous actions, and not hatred, discord, brutality, bloodshed, and carnage.

FOREIGN CAUSES OF ANTI-TOLERATION

I suppose that all these things were related to a Chinese, or an Indian of good sense, and that he had the patience to listen to them; I suppose that he wishes to learn the cause of the many persecutions in Europe, why such inveterate animosities still burst forth, whence arose so many reciprocal anathemas, so many pastoral instructions, which are no other than defamatory libels, *lettres de cachet*,

which under Louis XIV. filled the prisons and deserts: an answer must be given to him.

We must, blushing, tell him, the one believe in versatile grace, the other in effectual grace. In Avignon they say, that Jesus died for all, and in the suburbs of Paris, that He died for several. There it is averred that marriage is a visible sign of an invisible thing; here it is maintained, there is nothing invisible in this union. There are cities where the appearances of matter may subsist without the apparent matter existing, and where a body may be in fifty different places. There are other cities where matter is thought to be penetrable; and, in fine, to complete the whole, there are in these cities, great edifices where one thing is taught, and other edifices where a quite opposite thing must be believed.

The method of disputation varies with the color of the gowns, so that the disputants dressed in white, gray, and black, never agree—one person's being muffled up in a cloak, and another with a chasuble, will not have the same effect.

These are the causes of this reciprocal anti-toleration, which makes the subjects of the same state at eternal enmity; and by an unaccountable mental disorder, these seeds of discord are still allowed to subsist.

The Indian or Chinese certainly would not be able to comprehend that people should have persecuted one another, and cut one another's throats so long, for such reasons. He would immediately think that such horrid butchery could have no other ource than the direct opposite of moral prin-

ciples. He would be greatly surprised, when informed that our morals are all alike, the same as were professed at all times in China, and in India, the same as those by which all people have been governed.

How justly he might pity and despise us, when he found that this uniform and eternal morality could neither unite us, nor make us gentle, and that scholastic subtlety has made monsters of those who, by simply adhering to this same morality, would have been brothers.

What I have here said with respect to the Calases and Sirvens should have been repeated these fifteen hundred years past, from the times of the quarrels of Athanasius and Arius, which the Emperor Constantine immediately treated as senseless, to those of the Jesuit Letellier, and the Jansenist Quesnel, and the bills of confession.

No, there is not a single theological dispute which has not been attended with fatal consequences. Twenty volumes might be compiled from them; but I shall conclude with that of the Cordeliers and Jacobins, who paved the way for the reformation of the powerful republic of Berne. This, amongst a thousand histories, is the most horrible, the most sacrilegious, and, at the same time, the best attested.

PARTY SPIRIT AND FANATICISM.

If a simple monastic dispute could produce such strange and abominable crimes, let us not be astonished at the immense number, which the spirit of

party has originated between so many conflicting sects. Let us ever dread the excesses to which fanaticism leads us. Let us not leave this monster at liberty—let us not cease to cut his talons and destroy his teeth.

Let not reason, so often persecuted, remain silent, or we shall again see the same horrid acts repeated, that have so often disgraced the ages that are passed. The principle, the seed, the contagion of persecution still exists, and if it be not eradicated it will spread over the entire earth.

Judge then, at length, intelligent readers, which is best, to adore with reason and simplicity, to fulfil all the duties of society without originating questions equally fatal and incomprehensible, to be just and beneficent without joining any faction, or to give yourself up to fantastic opinions, which lead weak souls to destructive enthusiasm, and to the commission of crimes detestable and atrocious?

I do not think that I have swerved from my subject, in relating all these examples—in recommending to men that religion which unites them, and not that which divides them—that religion which is of no party, which forms virtuous citizens, and not impotent scholars—that religion which says that the whole law consists in loving God and one's neighbor, and not that which makes a tyrant of God and of one's neighbors so many victims.

Let us not make religion resemble those nymphs in the fable who associated with beasts and brought forth monsters.

Men have been perverted principally by monks. The wise and profound Leibnitz has evidently

proved it. He has shown that the tenth century, which is called the iron age, was far less barbarous than the thirteenth and those succeeding, which produced that herd of beggars, who made vows of living at the expense of laymen, and of tormenting them.

Being enemies to the human species—enemies to themselves as well as to others—incapable of appreciating the benefits of society, they necessarily detested it. They display amongst them a rigor under which they all groaned, and which they all helped to increase.

Every monk shakes off the chain which he forged for himself, strikes his brother with it, and is struck in his turn. Miserable in their sacred retreats, they want to make others miserable also. Their cloisters are the abode of repentance, discord, and hatred. Their secret jurisdiction is that of Morocco and Algiers. They bury for life in dungeons those of their brethren who may accuse them. In a word, they have established the Inquisition.

I know that in the multitude of these wretches who infest the half of Europe, and whom seduction, ignorance and poverty have precipitated into cloisters at fifteen years of age, there have been men of singular spirit, who have risen superior to their condition, and have been serviceable to their country. But I may venture to say, that all such great men, whose merit has pervaded both the cloister and the world, have invariably been persecuted by their jealous brethren. Every learned man, every man of genius, endures more insolence, is attacked with more envy in these seminaries, than

he would have experienced in the outside world. The ignoramus and the fanatic, who maintain the interest of the wallet, have more deference paid them than the greatest genius in Europe would receive.

The horror which reigns in these caverns seldom meets the secular eye; and when it bursts forth, it is with the explosion of horrible crimes. We have seen in the month of May of this very year (1766) eight of these unhappy men called Capuchins, accused of having murdered their superior in Paris.

Nevertheless, by a strange fatality, fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, on their bended knees reveal the inmost secrets of their hearts to these men—the refuse of nature—who, polluted with all crimes, boast of remitting the sins of mankind, in the name of that God whom they themselves create, and whom they claim to worship and adore.

How often have they inspired those they call their penitents, with all the atrocity of their own characters? They have been the principal fomenters of the religious animosities which embitter life. The judges who condemned the Calases and the Sirvens confessed to monks—they gave Calas two monks to accompany him to the scaffold. These two men, less barbarous than their brethren, at first acknowledged that Calas, expiring upon the wheel, called upon God with the resignation of innocence. But when they were required to give an attestation of this fact, they refused to do it, dreading to be punished by their superiors for having told the truth.

In fine, who would credit it, after the solemn verdict given in favor of the Calases, that there should be an Irish Jesuit, who, in the most insipid of all pamphlets, has dared to say that the defenders of the Calases and the masters of the requests, who did justice to their innocence, were enemies to religion?

The Catholics reply to these reproaches, that the Protestants are susceptible to the like reproaches. The murders of Servel and Barnwell, they say, are at least upon a par with the assassination of the counsellor Du Bourg. The death of Charles I. may be put in competition with that of Henry III. The gloomy rage of the English Presbyterians, and the fury of the cannibals of the Cévennes, are equal to the horrors of St. Bartholomew.

Compare sects, compare times, you will everywhere find, for one thousand six hundred years, nearly an equal proportion of absurdity and horror everywhere, among a race of blind men, who are destroying each other in the obscurity which surrounds them.

What book of controversy is ever written without gall? What theological dogma has not been the cause of spilling human blood?

This was the necessary effect of those unfortunate words:

"Whosoever listens not to the Church, shall be looked upon as a pagan and a publican."

Each party pretended to be the Church—each party has therefore constantly said "We abhor the officers of the customs, and we are enjoined to treat whoever differs with us in opinions as the

smugglers treat the officers of the customs, whenever they have the superiority."

Thus, the first dogma everywhere established was hatred.

When the King of Prussia entered for the first time into Silesia, deputies from a little Protestant borough, jealous of a Catholic village, came humbly to beg the king's permission for putting all the inhabitants of that village to the sword.

The king replied to the deputies: "If the people of that village came to ask my permission to cut your throats would you think me right to grant it to them?"

"Oh, gracious sovereign," replied the deputies, "the case is quite different; we are the true Church."

NOTES ON SOME OF THE WRITERS WHO LIVED IN THE AGE OF LOUIS XIV.

[These graphic sketches relate to the more interesting of the many referred to by Voltaire.]

Of the French writers who flourished in the age of Louis XIV.:

Abadie, James, was born in Béarn in 1658. He was celebrated for his "Treatise upon the Christian Religion"; but he afterward hurt the reputation of that work by another, called the "Opening of the Seven Seals." He died in Ireland in 1727.

Abadie, or Labadie, John, was born in the province of Guienne in 1610. He was first a Jesuit, then a Jansenist, and afterward a Protestant; and at

last wanted to form a sect of his own, and unite with La Bourignon, who told him that every one had his particular share of the Holy Spirit, and that hers was greatly superior to his. He has left thirty-one volumes of fanatical writings. I have given him a place here only as an example of the weakness of human understanding. He was not, however, without his disciples. He died at Altena in 1674.

Amelot de la Houssaye, Nicholas, was born at Orleans in 1634. His translation, with political notes, and his historical writings, are greatly sought after; but his alphabetical "Memoirs" are very faulty. He was the first who ever furnished a true idea of the Venetian government. The senate took umbrage at his history, being still prepossessed with the old mistaken notion that there are certain political mysteries which should not be revealed. Since then, however, it has been discovered that there are no such mysteries, and that true policy consists in being rich, and keeping good armies on foot. Amelot translated and commented upon Machiavelli's "Prince," a work which was long the favorite of petty lords, who disputed for ill-governed territories; but became useless at the time that so many mighty princes, always in arms, suppressed the ambitious views of the weaker. Amelot thought himself the greatest politician in Europe; but he could never rise above a middle station, and at length died extremely poor: the reason was, that he was a politician in genius only, and not in character. He died in 1706.

Anselm, an Augustine monk. He was the first

to compile a genealogical history of the great officers of the crown, which has been continued and augmented by Du Fourni, auditor of accounts. We have but a very confused notion of what constitutes the great officers of the crown. It is generally thought they are those who bear the title of "great," in virtue of their office; as grand master of the horse, and grand cup-bearer: but the constables, the marshals, and the chancellors, are great officers, though they do not bear the title of great; and there are others who do bear this title, and yet are not reckoned great officers. The captain of the guards, and the first gentleman of the bedchamber, are, in fact, great officers, though they are not reckoned such by Father Anselm. However, there is nothing certain on this head; and there is as great confusion and uncertainty in regard to all the rights and titles in France, as there is order and regulation in the administration. He died in 1694.

Arnauld, Anthony, a doctor of the Sorbonne, born in 1612, and the twentieth son of that Arnauld who pleaded against the Jesuits. He is universally known for his eloquence, his erudition, and his disputes, which acquired him so much reputation, and made him at the same time so unfortunate, according to our ordinary ideas of things, which place exile and poverty in the number of misfortunes, without reflecting that glory, friends, and a healthy age, were the portion of this famous man. It is said, in the supplement to Moréri, that Arnauld, in 1689, in order to ingratiate himself with the court, composed a libel against King William, under the title of "A True Picture of William-

Henry of Nassau, the Modern Absalom, Herod, Cromwell, and Nero." This style, which resembles that of Father Garaffe, is very unlike Arnauld's. Besides, he never entertained a notion of flattering the court. A book with so gross a title would have met with a very bad reception from Louis XIV. and those who ascribe this work, and the view in which it was written, to the famous Arnauld, are ignorant that writing books was no kind of introduction to that court. This great man died at Brussels in 1694.

Arnauld d'Andilly, Robert, elder brother to the former, was born in 1588. He was one of the great writers of Port-Royal. His translation of Josephus, which is the most esteemed of all his works, was presented by him to Louis XIV. at the age of 85. He was father of Simon Arnauld, Marquis of Pompone and minister of state, who, notwithstanding his high character and interest, was unable to prevent the disgrace which befell his uncle, the doctor of the Sorbonne, on account of his disputes. He died in 1674.

D'Auvrigni, the Jesuit. He is author of "A new Method of writing History." We have his "Chronological Annals from the Year 1601 to 1715," in which everything of importance that passed in Europe, during that space of time, is accurately and concisely related. He is very exact in the dates of his transactions. No writer has ever made a juster distinction between truth, falsehood, and uncertainty. He has likewise composed "Ecclesiastical Memoirs"; but unhappily they are tainted with a party spirit. Marcel and he have both been

eclipsed by President Hénault in his "Chronological History of France," which is the most concise, and at the same time the most complete, work of the kind ever published, and the most convenient for the reader.

Bayle, Peter, was born at Carlat, in the county of Foix, in 1647. He retired into Holland rather as a philosopher than a Calvinist. He was persecuted during life by Jurieu, and after his death by the enemies to philosophy. Could he have foreseen how universally his dictionary would be read, he would have made it still more useful, by retrenching obscure and increasing the illustrious names. He is more esteemed for his excellent manner of reasoning than for his style, that being frequently too prolix, loose, and incorrect; and sometimes so familiar as to sink into a degree of lowness: he was rather a great logician than a profound philosopher: he understood scarcely anything of natural philosophy, and was wholly unacquainted with the discoveries of the great Newton. Almost all his philosophical articles take for granted, or else contradict a Cartesian theory which has no longer any existence; he knew no other definition of matter than extent: its other acknowledged or supposed properties have at length given birth to true philosophy. There have been new demonstrations and new doubts, so that the skeptical Bayle is in several places not enough of the skeptic: he lived and died like a wise man. Desmaiseux has written his life, of which he has made a large volume, whereas it should not have exceeded

six pages. The life of a sedentary writer is to be found in his works. He died in 1706.

Beaumont de Péréfixe, Hardouin, was preceptor of Louis XIV., and archbishop of Paris. His "History of Henry IV.," which is only an abridgment, inspires us with a love for that great prince, and is well calculated to form a good king. He composed it for the use of his royal pupil. It was thought that Mézeray had a share in writing it: there is indeed a good deal of his manner in it; but Mézeray was not master of that affecting style in many places so worthy of the prince whose life Péréfixe wrote, and of him to whom he addressed it. Those excellent counsels for governing alone were not inserted until the second edition, after the death of Cardinal Mazarin. We can form a much juster idea of Henry IV. from a perusal of this history, than from that of Daniel, which is written in a dry manner, and has too much about Father Cotton, and too little concerning the great qualities of Henry IV. and the particulars of the life of this excellent king. Péréfixe affects every sensible heart, and makes us adore the memory of this prince, whose weaknesses were only those of an amiable man, and whose virtues were those of a great one. He died in 1670.

Beausobre, Isaac de, was born at Niort in 1659, of a family distinguished in the profession of arms. He was one of those who have done honor to their country, which they have been obliged to quit. His "History of Manichæanism" is one of the most learned, curious, and best written pieces extant: here we find clearly explained the philosophical

religion of the Manes, which was formed upon the dogmas of the ancient Zoroaster and Hermes, which for a long time seduced St. Augustine himself. This history is enriched with many curious things in antiquity; but after all, this, like so many other excellent works, is only a collection of human errors. He died at Berlin in 1738.

Boileau-Despréaux, Nicholas, of the Academy. He was born in the village of Crosne, in the neighborhood of Paris, in 1636: he made his first essay at the bar, and afterward entered into the college of the Sorbonne: but alike displeased with the tricks of both, he gave himself up entirely to the impulse of his genius, and became the honor of France. His works have been already so much commented upon that any panegyric here would be superfluous. He died in 1711.

Bossuet, James Benignus, of Dijon, was born in 1627; he was bishop of Condom, and afterwards of Meaux. We have fifty-one different pieces of his writing; but his "Funeral Orations," and his "Discourse on Universal History," are the works that have immortalized his name. It has been several times asserted in print, that this bishop was married, and that St. Hyacinthus, who was famous for the share he had in the little joke of Matanasius, passed for his son; but there never was any proof of this. A family of eminence in Paris, which has produced several persons of distinguished merit, affirm, that there was a private contract of marriage between Bossuet, when very young, and one Mademoiselle des Vieux; that this lady made a sacrifice of her passions and

hopes to the interest of her lover, whose eloquence bade fair to procure him considerable advancement in the church, and consented to give up the contract, as the marriage had not been consummated; that Bossuet, released from his engagements, entered into holy orders; and that after his death this family had the settling of this affair, and declare that the lady never made an ill use of the dangerous secrets she was mistress of; she always lived in a chaste and respectful friendship with the bishop of Meaux, who enabled her to purchase the little estate of Maulion, about five leagues distant from Paris, of which she took the title, and lived to almost the age of a hundred. It is moreover pretended that this great man's sentiments as a philosopher were different from what he taught as a divine, like a learned magistrate, who at the same time that he gives sentence, according to the letter of the law, may in private rise superior to it by the force of his genius. He died in 1704.

Bouhours, Dominic, a Jesuit, was born at Paris in 1628. The French language and good taste are much indebted to him: he was author of several very good pieces, which gave birth to some excellent criticisms: *ex privatis odiis respublica crescit.* His "Life of St. Ignatius de Loyola" did not greatly please the generality of readers; and that of St. Francis Xavier underwent some strictures; but his remarks on language, and above all his "Method of Judging Rightly of Works of Genius," will be always of use to young people, who are desirous of forming their taste; he teaches them to avoid

bombast, obscurity, far-fetched and false thoughts. If he passes sentence somewhat too severely upon certain passages of Tasso, and other Italian authors, he as often condemns them justly; his style is pure and pleasing. The little tract above mentioned greatly offended the Italians, and brought on a kind of national quarrel. It was thought, that the opinion of Father Bouhours, which was strengthened by that of Boileau, might come to be a kind of law. The Marquis d'Orsi, and some others, composed two very large volumes in defence of some of Tasso's verses: but here let it be remarked, that Father Bouhours would have had very little right to reproach the Italian writers with their false thoughts, who himself compares Ignatius Loyola to Cæsar, and Francis Xavier to Alexander, only that he was very seldom guilty of these faults.

Boulainvilliers, Count, of the house of Crouy: the most learned gentleman of the kingdom in history, and the most capable of writing that of France, had he not been too systematic. He calls the ancient feudal government the "Masterpiece of Human Genius": he regrets those times in which the people, enslaved by ignorant and brutal petty tyrants, were without industry, commerce, or property; and is of opinion, that a hundred lords, the oppressors of the earth, and the enemies of their prince, composed the most perfect of all governments. Notwithstanding this wild hypothesis he was an excellent citizen, as, notwithstanding his weakness for judicial astrology, he was an able philosopher, so far as it is the part of a

philosopher to hold life as nothing, and despise death. There is printed at the end of his works, a large scheme for rendering the King of France richer than all the other monarchs of the world. But it is plain that this piece was not written by the Count de Boulainvilliers. He died about 1720.

Bourdaloue was born at Bourges in 1632; he was a Jesuit, and the chief model for all good preachers in Europe. He died in 1704.

Breteuil, Gabrielle Emilie, Marchioness du Châtelet, was born in 1706. She illustrated the writings of Leibnitz, and translated Newton with comments—a merit which was of little use to her at court, but which gained her the veneration of every nation that had a love for learning, who admired her depth of genius and eloquence. Of all the women who have adorned France, she had the greatest share of true understanding, and affected the least to be thought a wit. She died in 1749.

De Bruis, the abbé, was born in Languedoc in 1639. Although the author of ten volumes of controversy, his name would have been buried in oblivion, but for his work called "The Grumbler," which is far superior to any of Molière's farces, and the "Advocate Patelin," an ancient monument of the true Gaulish simplicity revived by him, will make him known as long as there is a stage in France. He was assisted by Palaprat in these two pretty pieces. These are the only works of genius that were ever composed by two authors jointly. He died in 1723.

Calprenède, Gauthier de la, was born at Cahors, about 1612. He was one of the gentlemen in ordi-

nary to the king: he was the first who brought long romances into fashion. The merit of these consisted in a number of adventures, the intrigue of which was artfully enough conducted, and, though incredible, not altogether impossible. Boyardo, Ariosto, and Tasso, on the contrary, loaded their poetic romances with fictions entirely unnatural; but the charms of their versification, the innumerable beauties of the detail, and the admirable allegories, especially those of Ariosto, altogether, have made their poems immortal; while the works of La Calprenède, like most other great romance-writers, have fallen in estimation. What has chiefly contributed to their fall is the great perfection the stage is arrived at. In a good tragedy, or a good opera, we meet with a much greater number of sentiments than are to be found in all these enormous volumes: these sentiments are at the same time much better expressed, and there appears a much clearer knowledge of the human heart. Thus Racine and Quinault, who have given a little into the style of these romances, have contributed to obliterate them by speaking more truly to the heart, and in a manner more tender and harmonious. He died in 1663.

Cassini, John Dominick, was born in the county of Nice in 1625, and was invited to France by Colbert in 1666. He was the first astronomer of his age; but he began, like all others, by the study of astrology. As he was naturalized in France, and married and had children there, and died in Paris, he may justly be accounted in the number of Frenchmen. He has rendered his

name immortal by his meridional clock of St. Petrona at Boulogne, which shows the variations in the swiftness of the earth's motion round the sun. He was the first who demonstrated, by the parallax of the planet Mars, that the sun is at least thirty-three millions of miles distant from the earth. He foretold the path described by the comet of 1664; he also discovered the five satellites of Saturn, of which Huygens had seen only one; and this discovery of Cassini's was celebrated in a historical medal of Louis XIV. He died in 1712.

Chapelain, John, was born in 1595. Had it not been for his "*Pucelle*," or "Maid of Orleans," he would have had some reputation in the literary world: he got more, however, by that wretched poem than Homer did by his "Iliad." Chapelain was nevertheless of some use by his learning. It was he who corrected Racine's first poetical attempts. At this first setting out, he was the oracle of all poets, and at length became their disgrace; he died in 1674.

La Chapelle, receiver-general of the finances, was author of some tragedies, which had success in their time. He was one of those who endeavored to imitate Racine; for this great writer, like the great masters in painting, formed a school without knowing it. This Raphael in poetry did not, however, form a Julio Romano; and yet some of his first disciples wrote with tolerable purity of language; whereas, in the decline which followed, we have seen, even in our time, whole tragedies in which there are not four lines together without some gross faults.

Choisy, Francis de, was born at Rouen in 1644; he was envoy at Siam, and has left us an account of that embassy: he composed several historical pieces, and a translation of the "Imitation of Jesus Christ," dedicated to Madame de Maintenon, with this motto: *"Concupiscet rex decorum tuum"*; as also the "Memoirs of the Countess des Barres," which countess is himself; he having worn the dress, and lived as a woman for several years: he made a purchase of an estate near Tours, under the name of the Countess des Barres. In these "Memoirs" he relates freely the many mistresses he had under this disguise. Whilst he led this life he wrote the "History of the Church." In his "Memoirs of the Court" we meet with several facts, of which some are true, some false, and many taken upon trust; they are written in rather too familiar a style.

Corneille, Peter, was born at Rouen in 1606. Though at present only six or seven of his pieces are played, yet he will always be the father of the stage. He is the first who raised the genius of the nation, and that is sufficient to gain pardon for about twenty of his pieces, which, except in a very few places, are the worst that we have, both for style, barrenness of intrigue, and insipid and misplaced amours; and by a heap of wire-drawn conversations, which are the reverse of true tragedy. But we are to judge of a great man only by his excellencies, and not by his faults. It is said that his translation of the "Imitation of Christ" went through thirty-two editions; this however is as difficult to believe as it is to read one of them.

He received a gratification from the king in his last illness; he died in 1684.

It is said in several printed collections of anecdotes, that he had a particular place set apart for him at the play-house, and that, whenever he came in, everybody rose and received him with a clap. Unhappily, mankind are not so ready to do justice to merit. The real truth is, that the king's comedians refused to play his last eight pieces, and he was obliged to give them to another company.

Corneille, Thomas, was born at Rouen in 1625. He would have gained great reputation, if he had not had a brother. There are thirty-four dramatic pieces by him. He died poor, in the year 1709.

Daniel, Gabriel, a Jesuit.—He was historiographer of France, and has rectified the mistakes of Mézeray, concerning the first and second races of our kings. It is alleged against him, that his diction is not always sufficiently pure; that his style is poor and uninteresting; that he is not lively in his descriptions; that he has not given sufficient insight into customs, manners, and laws; and that his history is a tedious detail of military operations in which a historian of his character is almost always mistaken.

The Count of Boulainvilliers, in his memoirs on the French government, says, that Daniel is guilty of a thousand errors. This is saying a great deal; but luckily those errors are of as little consequence as the real truths would have been in their room; for, of what importance is it to know whether it was the right or the left wing that gave way at the battle of Montlhéry, or by what way

Louis the Fat entered the ruins of Puiset? A member of society is desirous of knowing by what steps the government came to change its form, what were the several privileges and encroachments of the different bodies, what was done by the general estates, what was the spirit of the nation, etc. Father Daniel's history, with all its faults, is still the best that is to be found, at least till the reign of Louis XI. He asserts, in his preface, that the early periods of the history of France are more interesting than those of Rome, because Clovis and Dagobert possessed larger territories than Romulus and Tarquin. He was not aware, that the weak beginnings of all great things are interesting to mankind; we are fond of beholding the trifling reign of a nation, to which France was but a province, and which extended its empire to the Elbe, the Euphrates, and the Niger. It might be acknowledged that our history and that of other nations, from the fifth century to the fifteenth, is only a chaos of barbarous adventures, under barbarous names.

Descartes, René, born at Touraine in 1596, was son of a counsellor of the Parliament of Brittany. He was the greatest mathematician of his time, but a philosopher who knew the least of nature, when compared with those who came after him. He passed the greater part of his life out of France, that he might pursue his philosophical studies more at liberty, in imitation of Saumaise, who took a similar step; but he was disappointed of the quiet he thought to find in a retirement in Holland. Two professors of the balderdash school divinity, taught

at that time, the one named Voet, and the other Shockius, brought the ridiculous charge of atheism against him, with which almost every philosopher has been branded by contemptible writers. It availed him nothing that he had exhausted his genius in collecting proofs of the existence of a God, and in searching for new ones. His enemies compared him to Vanini, in one of the pieces they published against him; not that Vanini was really an atheist—the contrary has been demonstrated—but he was burned as such, and they could not have made a more shocking comparison. Descartes found it difficult to obtain a very slight satisfaction, by a decree of the Academy of Groningen. His "Meditations," his "Discourse on Method," are still in esteem; his natural philosophy is entirely fallen, being founded neither on geometry nor experiments. He was a long time in possession of so prodigious a reputation that La Fontaine, who knew nothing of the matter, indeed, but was the echo of public voice, said of him,

> Descartes, in ages past, had been
> Adored as God. He ranked between
> Pure soul and man immured in cloister,
> As human brutes 'twixt man and oyster.

The abbé Genêt, a writer of the present century, has unfortunately been at the pains to translate Descartes's natural philosophy into French verse.

It is only since 1730 that France has begun to recover from the errors of that chimerical philosophy, and since that experimental philosophy and geometry have been cultivated. Descartes has

had the same fate in natural philosophy, as Ronsard had in poetry. He died at Stockholm, in 1650.

Duché was valet de chambre to Louis XIV. He made some tragedies for the court, taken from holy writ, like Racine, but not with equal success. His opera of "Iphigenia at Tauris" is his best piece. It is written in the sublime taste; and, though it is but an opera, it affords a strong idea of the best things in the Greek tragedies. This taste did not last long, and soon after we were reduced to simple ballets, consisting of detached acts, made solely for the sake of introducing the dances; thus, even the opera began to degenerate, at the time that almost every other theatrical production was upon the decline.

Madame de Maintenon made the fortune of this author, by recommending him in such strong terms to Monsieur de Pontchartrain, secretary of state, that, supposing him to be a person of some consideration, the minister went to pay him a visit. When Duché, who at that time lived very obscurely, saw a secretary of state enter his house, he thought it was to carry him to the Bastille.

Fénelon, Francis de Salignac, archbishop of Cambray, was born in Périgord, in 1651. We have fifty-five different productions of his, all of which seem to come from a heart full of virtue, but his "Telemachus" especially inspires that virtue: he has been in vain condemned by Gueudeville and the abbé Faidit: he died at Cambray, in 1715.

After the death of Fénelon, Louis XIV. burned, with his own hand, all the manuscripts which the Duke of Burgundy had preserved of his precep-

tor's. Ramsay, who was brought up under this celebrated prelate, wrote to me in these words: "Had he been born in England, his genius would have discovered itself more strongly; and he would, without fear, have given full scope to his principles, which no one was acquainted with."

Lefèvre, Anne, Madame Dacier. She was born in the Calvinist faith, at Saumur, in 1651, and is famous for her great learning. The Duke of Montausier employed her on one of those books which were called the Dauphin's, for the education of that prince. "Florus," with Latin notes, is hers: her translations of Terence and Homer have brought her immortal honor: her only fault was a too great fondness for her own translations. La Motte attacked her with wit, and she replied with erudition. She died at the Louvre in 1720.

La Fontaine, John, was born at Château-Thierry in 1621. He was the most plain and simple man living, but admirable in his way, though negligent and unequal. He was the only good writer of his time who did not partake of the bounties of Louis XIV., though entitled to them by his merit and his poverty. His "Fables" are for the most part infinitely superior to any that have been written before or since, in any language whatsoever. In the tales which he imitated from Ariosto, he lacks that writer's elegance and purity; he falls far short of him in his descriptions, which defect escaped Boileau in his "Dissertation on Joconde," because he did not understand Italian: but in those tales which he has taken from Boccaccio, La Fontaine is superior, as having a much greater

share of wit, elegance, and art, than the Italian, whose only merit is simplicity, perspicuity, and exactness of language, but La Fontaine corrupted the French. He died in 1695.

Fontenelle, Bernard le Bovier de.—Though he was living in 1756, yet he must be an exception to the rule we have laid down for ourselves of not admitting any living person into this catalogue, his great age, being near a hundred when he died, seems to demand this distinction. He is at present equally above panegyric and criticism. He may be considered as the most universal genius that the age of Louis XIV. produced, and may be compared to a soil that from its happy situation bears every kind of fruit. He was not twenty years of age, when he composed the greatest part of the tragic opera "Bellerophon"; after which he wrote his opera of "Thetis and Peleus," in which he has greatly imitated Quinault. It was performed with great success; but his "Æneas and Lavinia" was not so well received. He tried his powers in tragedy, and assisted Mademoiselle Bernard in some of her pieces. He composed two, one of which was played in 1680, but never printed. This piece drew upon him for a long time very unjust reproaches; for he had merit enough to be sensible, that notwithstanding his extensive genius, he was not possessed of the talents of his uncle, Peter Corneille, for tragedy. He wrote several detached pieces, in which there appeared a depth of knowledge and ingenuity, that plainly discover a man superior to his own works. In his "Dialogues of the Dead" and in his verses we may remark the

spirit of Voiture, but much more extensive and philosophical. His "Plurality of Worlds" was a performance singular in its kind. He had the art of making an agreeable book of the "Oracles of Vandale." The delicate subjects which are touched upon in that work subjected him to some underhand persecutions, which, however, he had the good fortune to get the better of. He perceived how dangerous it is to be in the right in those things where men of power and interest are in the wrong. He then applied himself to geometry and natural philosophy, in which he succeeded with as much ease as he had done in the more pleasing arts. Being appointed perpetual secretary to the Academy of Sciences, he occupied that office for more than forty years, with universal approbation. In his history of that academy, he frequently throws a strong light upon the most obscure memoirs. He it was who introduced that elegant manner of treating the sciences. If he is in some places too flowery, we should consider them as rich harvests wherein flowers naturally grow up with the corn.

His "History of the Academy of Sciences" would be as useful as it is judiciously executed, if his only task had been to give an account of truths brought to light; but he was obliged to explain different opinions that contradicted one another, and which are for the most part destroyed.

The elogiums which he pronounced on the deceased members of the academy have the singular merit of rendering the sciences respectable, and of establishing the merit of the author. In

vain have the abbé Desfontaines, and others of his stamp, attempted to obscure his reputation; it is the property of great men to have contemptible enemies. Notwithstanding his having lately published a few indifferent comedies, and an "Apology for the Vortices of Descartes," we will readily pardon the faults in his dramatic pieces, on account of his great age; and his Cartesian principles, in consideration of those ancient opinions having been when he was young the generally received ones of all Europe.

In a word, he is considered as the head of those who have the pleasing art of throwing new lights and graces upon the abstract sciences. He has also great merit in every other work which he has undertaken. These great talents were supported by a knowledge of languages and history; and he was without contradiction superior to all the learned men who have not had the gift of invention.

Gassendi, Peter, was born in Provence, in 1592. He was the restorer of part of the Epicurean system of natural philosophy. He perceived the necessity of atoms, and of a vacuum; and what he affirmed, Newton and others have since demonstrated. He was not considered so great as Descartes, because he was more rational, and no inventor of hypotheses: nevertheless he was accused of atheism, as well as Descartes. Some imagined that he who would, with Epicurus, admit a vacuum, would, like him, deny the existence of a God. This is the way of reasoning of all detractors and calumniators. In Provence, where there was no

one jealous of him, Gassendi was called the holy priest. At Paris, the voice of envy gave him the title of atheist. It is true that he was a skeptic, and that philosophy had taught him to doubt of everything, but not of the existence of a supreme being. He died in 1656.

Godeau, Anthony.—He was one of those who helped to establish the French Academy: he was a poet, an orator, and a historian. It is well known that for the sake of a pun, and in reward for his having rendered the *"Benedicite"* into verse, Cardinal Richelieu gave him the bishopric of Grasse; his "Ecclesiastical History" in prose is more valued than his poem on the "Church Calendar"; he was greatly deceived in thinking to equal the *"Fasti"* of Ovid; neither his subject nor his genius being sufficient for it. It is a great mistake to think subjects of Christianity as fit for poetry as those of Paganism, whose mythology, as pleasing as it was false, animated all nature. He died in 1672.

Duhalde, the Jesuit, without stirring out of Paris, or having ever seen China, has, from the memoirs of his fraternity, given the best and most ample description of the Chinese empire that has ever appeared. He died in 1743.

Our insatiable curiosity for knowing every minute particular relating to the religion, laws, and manners of the Chinese, is not yet satisfied: a burgomaster of Middleburg, named Hudde, a man of great fortune, guided wholly by his curiosity, took a voyage to China, in the year 1700, where he laid out the greater part of his fortune in informing himself of everything. He became so proficient

in the Chinese language that he was taken for a native of that country: luckily for him his face favored the mistake. After some time he found means to be raised to the rank of a mandarin, in which quality he travelled through all the provinces, and at length returned to Europe, with a collection of forty years' observations. Unhappily, the ship they were on board was cast away, which was the greatest loss that ever befell the republic of letters.

Huet, Peter Daniel, was born at Caen in 1630; he was a man of universal learning, and retained the same ardor for study till the age of ninety-one: he was invited to Stockholm by Queen Christina, and was one of those illustrious personages who assisted in the education of the dauphin, than whom no prince had ever greater masters. Huet turned priest when he was forty years of age, and had the bishopric of Avranche given him, which he afterward resigned, that he might be more at leisure to pursue his studies in retirement. Of all his productions, "The Commerce and Navigation of the Ancients," and the "Origin of Romances," are the most read. His treatise on "The Weakness of the Human Understanding" made a great noise, and seemed to contradict his "Evangelical Demonstrations"; he died in 1721.

Longepierre, Hilary-Bernard, Baron of.—He was born in Burgundy in 1658: he was master of all the beauties of the Greek language; a very rare degree of merit in his time. We have some translations by him in verse of "Anacreon," "Sappho," "Bion," and "Moschus"; his tragedy of "Medea,"

though unequally written, and too full of declamations, is far superior to that of Peter Corneille: but Corneille's "Medea" was written before he was at the height of his reputation. Longepierre composed several other tragedies upon the model of the Greek poets, whom he has happily imitated in not blending love with subjects of terror and cruelty; but at the same time he has copied them in the tediousness of their commonplaces, and in the barrenness of action and intrigue, and not equalled them in beauty of elocution, which constitutes the greatest merit of a poet. Though he wrote several other tragedies in the Greek taste, he gave only "Medea" and "Electra" to the stage. He died in 1727.

Maintenon, Frances d'Aubigné, Scarron, Marchioness of.—She was an author as well as Madame de Sévigné, because her letters have been printed after her death. Both of these ladies write with a great deal of spirit, but of a very different kind. The "Letters of Madame de Sévigné" are dictated by the heart and the imagination, and are more sprightly and free. Those of Madame de Maintenon are more constrained, and seem as if she had foreseen they would one day be made public. Madame de Sévigné, in writing to her daughter, wrote only for that daughter. There are several anecdotes to be found in both these collections. We may perceive in those of Madame de Maintenon, that she was married to Louis XIV.; that she had considerable influence in State affairs, but that she did not direct them; that she did not hasten the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and its consequences,

neither did she oppose it; that she sided with the Molinists at first, because Louis XIV. did so, and that at length she became seriously attached to that party; that Louis XIV. in the latter part of his life, used to carry relics about him; with several other private anecdotes. But the little knowledge that may be gained from this collection is too dearly bought by the number of useless letters it contains; a fault which is common to all collections of this kind. If nothing was to be printed but what is useful, there would not be a hundredth part so many bad books. She died at St. Cyr in 1719.

Malebranche, Nicholas, of the Oratory, was born at Paris in 1638. He was one of the deepest meditators that ever wrote. As he abounded with that forcible imagination which makes more disciples than truth, he had his disciples in his time; there were those that went by the name of "Malebranchians." He has admirably shown the errors of the senses and imagination; but when he attempted to dive into the nature of the soul, he was lost in the abyss, as others had been before him. He was, like Descartes, a great man from whom very little was to be learned. He died in 1715.

Massillon was born in Provence in 1663. He belonged to the Oratory, and was bishop of Clermont. No preacher had a better acquaintance with the world: he was more flowery and pleasing than Bourdaloue; his eloquence was that of the courtier, the academic, and the man of wit; and what is more, he was a philosopher, moderate in his opinion, and a friend to toleration. He died in 1742.

Molière, John Baptiste, was born at Paris in 1620. He was the best comic poet that any nation ever produced. This article led me to read over the comic poets of antiquity; and it must be confessed, that if we compare the art and regularity of our stage with the loose and unconnected scenes of the ancients, their weak intrigues, and the indelicate custom of making their actors relate, in long, insipid, and improbable soliloquies, either what they had done, or what they were going to do; it must be confessed, I say, that Molière drew comedy from its chaos, as Corneille did tragedy; and that the French are superior, in this respect, to any nation under the sun. Molière, again, had another kind of merit than what either Corneille, Racine, Boileau, or La Fontaine possessed: he was a philosopher, and such both in theory and practice; and yet to this philosopher was it that Harlay, archbishop of Paris, so despised on account of his morals, denied the empty honor of sepulture; and the king himself was obliged to intercede with that prelate to permit Molière to be privately interred in the churchyard of the little chapel of St. Joseph, in the suburbs of Montmartre. He died in 1673.

Montesquieu, Charles, president of the Parliament of Bordeaux. He was born in 1689. At twenty-three years of age he published his "Persian Letters," a comic work, abounding with strokes that show an understanding more solid than his book. This work is an imitation of the "Siamese" of Dufresny and the "Turkish Spy"; but such an imitation as shows how the originals should have been written. Such performances seldom succeed

but by the help of a foreign air; and a satire upon our own nation is better received from the pen of an Asiatic than from that of a countryman, as what is common of itself becomes by this means singular. The genius which reigns in the "Persian Letters" opened the doors of the French Academy to the President Montesquieu, though that Academy had itself been ill-treated in his book; but at the same time, the freedom with which he speaks of the government, and of abuses in religion, incurred the displeasure of Cardinal Fleury, who ordered them to be shut against him again. He fell upon an artful method of making that minister his friend: in a few days' time he caused a new edition of his book to be printed, in which he retrenched or softened everything that could appear exceptionable to him, either as a cardinal, or a minister of state. Monsieur de Montesquieu then waited upon his eminence in person with his book, who, though not much accustomed to read, perused some part of it. This air of confidence, supported by the good offices of some persons of credit, won over the cardinal, and Montesquieu was admitted into the Academy.

After this he published his treatise on "The Greatness and Fall of the Roman People"; a worn-out subject, but which he made new by very ingenious reflections, and lively descriptions: so that it is a political history of the Roman empire. At length his "Spirit of Laws" made its appearance; a work in which there appears much more genius than either in Puffendorf or Grotius. We cannot read these authors without doing ourselves some

kind of violence; but we read the "Spirit of Laws" as much for amusement as instruction. This book is written with as much freedom as the "Persian Letters"; and this freedom did not a little contribute to its success, by drawing upon him enemies, who increased his reputation by the hatred they brought upon themselves. These were a set of men, who, delighting in the obscure factions of ecclesiastical controversy, hold their own opinions as sacred, and those who despise them as impious and sacrilegious. They wrote with great acrimony against Montesquieu, and prevailed on the Sorbonne to examine his book; but the infamy and contempt with which his persecutors were loaded, prevented that college from proceeding any farther. The principal merit of the "Spirit of Laws" is that love for the laws that reigns throughout the whole work, which love is founded on that for mankind. What is most extraordinary is, that the encomiums he gives to the English government pleased most in France. The smart and stinging irony against the Inquisition, which is found in this work, charmed all the world, except the Inquisitors: his reflections, which are almost always profound, he supports by examples drawn from the history of all nations. It is true that he has been reproached with taking his examples too frequently from inconsiderable savage nations, in a manner unknown, and upon the accounts of travellers, whose fidelity there is too much reason to suspect. He is not always very exact in his quotations: for instance, he makes the author of the "Political Testament," ascribed to Cardinal Richelieu, say: "If there should

be found among the people an honest man unfortunate, that man must not be employed"; whereas "The Political Testament," in the place quoted, only says that it is best to employ men of fortune and education, as the least liable to be corrupted. The continual want of method throughout this work, the singular affectation of putting no more than two or three lines in a chapter, and that frequently, and those lines nothing but a piece of pleasantry, has disgusted many readers, who complain of meeting sometimes with sallies of wit where they expected arguments. This author is also reproached with having advanced too many doubtful ideas for certain ones; but if he does not always instruct his reader, he always sets him thinking, and that is no small degree of merit. His lively and ingenious manner of expression, in which we trace the imagination of his countryman, Montaigne, has, above all, contributed to the great reputation of the "Spirit of Laws"; the same thing said by a man of equal or even superior learning to him would not have been read. In short, there is not any work in which there is more wit, and a greater number of learned ideas and bold things; or where a reader can find more opportunities for instruction, whether he approves or condemns his opinions. We may, with justice, rank this in the number of original works that were an ornament to the age of Louis XIV. and which have no model in antiquity. He died in 1755, like a philosopher, as he had lived.

La Motte-Houdart, Anthony, was born at Paris in 1672. He was famous for his writings, and

amiable in his manners: he had many friends, that is to say, people who were pleased with his company; but I was with him in his last moments, and saw him expire without a creature by his bedside. This was in 1731.

Pascal, Blaise.—His father was the first intendant that was appointed at Rouen: he was born in 1623, and was a great genius, of the superiority of which he thought of availing himself, in the same manner as kings of their power, that is, to bring everything in subjection to him by main force. What in his "Thoughts" most disgusts some readers is the contemptuous, authoritative air he assumes; but he should first have been sure he had reason on his side. It must be owned that he contributed much to the improvement of our language, and eloquence. His enemies and those of Arnauld found means to prevent any notice being taken of either in Perrault's book on "Illustrious Men." This gave occasion to the quoting and applying to them that passage of Tacitus: *Præfulgebant Cassius et Brutus eo ipso quod eorum effigies non visebantur.* He died in 1662.

Petis de la Croix, Francis.—He was one of those whose merit the great Colbert encouraged and rewarded. At the age of seventeen, he was sent by Louis XIV. to Turkey and Persia, to learn the Oriental languages; and, what will appear a little extraordinary, he wrote a part of the life of Louis in Arabic, which is read and esteemed in the East: he wrote besides, the "History of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane," compiled from ancient Arabian authors; and many other valuable tracts. But of

all his performances his translation of "A Thousand and One Days," is the most read.

Quinault, Philip, born at Paris in 1635, was auditor of accounts, and wrote some very beautiful pieces of lyric poetry, notwithstanding Boileau's satire, which he bore with a great deal of good nature. Quinault was much superior in his way to Lulli. The former will always be read, whereas the latter, setting aside his recitative, cannot even be sung: yet in his own time he was supposed to be indebted to Lulli for his reputation: but time tries all things. He partook, like many other great men, of the bounty of Louis XIV. He died in 1688.

Marquis de Quincy, lieutenant-general of the artillery, was author of the "Military History of Louis XIV." He is very minute in his details, which may be useful to those who have patience to follow him through the operations of a campaign. Could exactly the same situation be supposed to exist, they would furnish good examples, but that is never the case, neither in business nor war. The difference is always great, and the resemblance imperfect. The conduct of war, like a game in which skill is requisite, is only to be learned by practice and service, and yet the event of a battle, like that of a game of hazard, is often determined by chance.

Racine, John, born at Ferté-Milon in 1639, and educated at Port-Royal. When he wrote the tragedy of *"Théagènes,"* and presented it to Molière, and that of the *"Frères Ennemis,"* with the subject of which Molière furnished him, he was an ecclesiastic. In the patent to "Andromache," he is

styled prior to Epinay. Louis XIV. was not insensible to his great merit. He made him a gentleman in ordinary, nominated him sometimes on his retinue when he went to Marly, made him lie in his apartment once during a fit of sickness, besides showing many other marks of favor; yet Racine died of chagrin, from an apprehension of his having incurred his displeasure; by which it appears that he was a greater poet than philosopher. The merit of his works was not ascertained till of late. "Mariamne," says St. Evremond, "Sophonisba," "Alcionée," "Andromache," and "Britannicus" are affecting pieces. Thus was not only Corneille's "Sophonisba," a sorry performance, but the absurd "Mariamne" and "Alcionée" set on a level with the other masterpieces. Thus is gold confounded with trash during the lives of ingenious men, but death separates them. He died in 1699.

Regnard, Francis, was born at Paris in 1647. His travels alone were sufficient to render him famous. He was the first Frenchman who visited Lapland, where he left this inscription cut on a rock: *"Sistimus hic tandem nobis ubi defuit orbis."* "I have got at last to the extremity of the world." He was taken in the Mediterranean by a corsair, and carried to Algiers, but was afterward ransomed and made treasurer of France, and lieutenant of the waters and forests. He was a man of pleasure and a philosopher; his genius was sprightly, and truly comic. His comedy called "The Gamester," is thought not inferior to those of Molière. One must be a great stranger to the genius of the two authors, to suppose that he stole that piece from

Dufréni. He dedicated his "Menechmes" to Despréaux, and afterwards wrote against him, because he had not done him justice. Notwithstanding the gayety of his temper, he died of chagrin at the age of 52. It has even been said that he cut short the thread of his days himself. He made his exit in 1658.

La Rochefoucauld, Francis, Duke de, was born in 1613. His memoirs are read, but his thoughts are not only read, but got by heart. He died in 1680.

Rollin, Charles, born at Paris in 1661, was rector of the university, and the first of that body who wrote French with purity and dignity. The last volumes of his "Ancient History" are not equal to the first, as being composed in much greater haste; yet it is one of the best compilations extant in any language, because Rollin was a master of eloquence, which few compilers are. Had he been also a philosopher, it would have greatly enhanced the value of his work. There are a number of ancient histories; but in none of them do we find that philosophical sagacity that distinguishes between truth and falsehood, between probability and fable or fiction, and suppresses what is useless and frivolous. He died in 1741.

Rotrou, John, born in 1609, was the founder of the theatre. The first scene and a part of the fourth act of *"Venceslas"* are masterpieces. Corneille used to call him his father; but every one will agree that the son greatly surpassed the father. *"Venceslas"* was not written till after "The Cid." He died in 1650.

Rousseau, John Baptist, born at Paris, 1669. Fine verses, great errors in conduct, and great sufferings, have conspired to render him famous. We must either suppose him the author of the verses that occasioned his banishment, which, by the bye, are not unlike many that he avowed, or throw a slur upon the two tribunals that condemned him. It is not the first time that two tribunals, and even more numerous bodies, have, with one voice, pronounced very unjust sentences, when party spirit runs high. This much is certain, that the party against Rousseau were full of rancor and resentment. Few men have ever been more universally hated and persecuted. Nothing less would satisfy the public than his banishment; nay, their aversion continued unabated several years afterward. But at last the success of his rival, La Motte, the reception he met with, the reputation which, as they thought, he had unjustly and unfairly acquired, and the artifice by which he had raised himself to a sort of empire in literature, made all the men of letters forsake him, and declare for Rousseau, whom they now no longer dreaded. By their means the public in general was reconciled to him. La Motte now began to appear to them too happy, because he was rich and in vogue, notwithstanding he was blind, and labored under many infirmities and disorders. On the contrary, Rousseau was viewed in the light of an unhappy exile; and to live at Vienna or Brussels was thought a greater misfortune than to be blind and infirm. But indeed both were very unhappy: only the one was the victim of nature, the other of the unlucky ad-

venture that occasioned his banishment. Both may serve to show what partiality and injustice men are capable of, how much they vary in their judgments, and what folly it is to hunt after popular applause. He died at Brussels in 1740. See the article on "La Motte."

Le Sage, born in 1667. His romance of "Gil Blas" still keeps its ground, because it is natural. He died in 1747.

St. Évremond, Charles, born in Normandy in 1613. Loose morals, letters written to courtiers, at a time when the word "court" was pronounced with an emphasis everywhere, indifferent verses composed in illustrious societies, and for that reason called "Society Verses," all concurred, with a good deal of spirit, to raise the reputation of his works. They were printed by one des Maiseux, together with the life of the author, which alone makes one large volume, and yet in the whole there are not four pages that are interesting. It contains scarcely anything but what is to be found in his works. It was an imposition of the booksellers and editors. By such artifices a way has been found to multiply books *ad infinitum,* and without adding anything to the knowledge of mankind. His exile, his philosophy, and works, are well known. When he was asked on his deathbed, if he would be reconciled to the Church, his answer was: "I wish I could be reconciled to my appetite." He died in 1703, and was interred at Westminster, with the kings and illustrious men of England.

L'Abbé de Saint-Pierre, Castel, a gentleman of Normandy, who, though his income was not great,

yet for some time shared it with the celebrated Fontenelle and Varignon, wrote a great deal on politics. There is no better character of his works in general than that given by Cardinal de Bois: that they were the reveries of a good subject. He was simple enough to inculcate in his works the most trivial moral truths, and to propose for the most part things impracticable; he was continually harping on the scheme of a perpetual peace, and a sort of universal parliament, which he called the Diet of Europe. Part of this chimerical project had been attributed to Henry IV. and the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, the better to recommend his notions, pretended that the European diet had been planned and approved by the dauphin, Duke of Burgundy, and that the scheme was found among his papers after his death. But it was a mere fiction of his own, to make his project the better relished. He honestly published the answer that Cardinal Fleury made to his proposal: "You have forgotten, Monsieur," says the cardinal, "to propose in the first place to send a company of missionaries to prepare and dispose the hearts of the several princes." Yet, notwithstanding all this, Abbé de Saint-Pierre did a deal of good. He contributed not a little to deliver France from the hardships of the arbitrary land-tax; with respect to that, and that alone, he wrote and acted like a statesman. He was unanimously excluded from the French Academy, because he had, during the regency of the Duke of Orleans, a little too harshly opposed in his *"Polysinodie"* the establishment of councils to the method of governing adopted by Louis XIV., the

protector of the Academy. The intrigue for that end was managed by Cardinal de Polignac, and it succeeded. What is a little unaccountable is, that the regent did not prevent it, though Cardinal de Polignac was at that very time plotting against him; and he had given Abbé Saint-Pierre an apartment in the Palais Royal, and had his whole family in his service. However, the abbé did not complain. He continued to live like a philosopher, with those who had excluded him. Boyer, the ancient bishop of Mirepoix, his fellow-member, prevented his elogium from being pronounced at the Academy according to the custom. These fine speeches at the death of an academician add nothing either to his merit or reputation; yet in the present case, the refusal was barbarous. The service he had done his country, his probity, and his gentle disposition entitled him to better treatment. A few days before his death, I asked him what he thought of it. He replied, that he considered it as a journey or jaunt into the country. Of all his performances, that on the future abolition of Mahometanism is the most remarkable. He is positive that the time will come, when reason will be more than a match for superstition everywhere; when men will see and be convinced that, to please God, patience, beneficence, and humanity alone are required.

"It is impossible," says he, "that a book, in which falsehoods are asserted for truths, absurdities advanced that contradict common sense, and praises bestowed on actions manifestly unjust, should be a revelation from God." He fancies that in five hundred years, all sorts of persons, even the lowest,

will be convinced of the imposture, and that even the mufti and the cadis will find it to their interest to disabuse the people, and to reform their religion, in order to render themselves more necessary and respected.

Sandras, Courtilz de, born at Montargis in 1644, is mentioned for no other reason than to put the French, especially foreigners, on their guard against those forgeries published in Holland. Courtilz was one of the most infamous writers in this respect. He deluged Europe with fictions, under the title of histories. What a scandalous thing was it that a captain of the regiment of Champagne should go to Holland, and support himself by selling lies to the booksellers. He, and such as follow his example, in writing libels against their country, against good princes who scorn, and private persons who have it not in their power to punish them, can be considered only as the most execrable and abandoned wretches. He wrote the "Conduct of France Since the Peace of Nimeguen," and the answer to it: "The State of France Under Louis XIII. and XIV."; "The Conduct of Mars in the Dutch Wars"; "The Love Conquests of the Great Alexander"; "The Love Intrigues of France"; "The Life of Turenne and Admiral Coligny"; "The Memoirs of Rochefort, Artagnan, Monbrun, Vordac, and the Marchioness de Frêne"; the "Political Testament" of Colbert, and many other pieces, by which simpletons have been imposed on and abused. The authors of those miserable pamphlets against France, entitled "le Glaneur," "l'Épilogueur," are his humble imi-

tators. These pieces, which hunger prompted, and stupidity and falsehood dictated, are read by none but the canaille. He died at Paris in 1712.

Saurin, James, born at Nîmes in 1677. He was esteemed the best preacher among the Protestants. Notwithstanding, his style is said to savor of the refugee. "It can hardly be supposed," says he, "that those who have foregone their country for the sake of their religion, should speak their native language in its purity." But in his time, the French spoken in Holland was better than it is at present. Bayle's style had nothing of the refugee; the only thing that can be objected to it is a familiarity that approaches sometimes to lowness. The defects in the language of the Calvinist preachers, were occasioned chiefly by their copying the incorrect phraseology of the first reformers; besides, almost all of them having been educated at Saumur, in Poitou, in Dauphiny, and in Languedoc, they still retained the vicious provincial modes of expression. The place of minister to the nobility at The Hague was instituted on purpose for Saurin. He was a man of learning and pleasure, and died in 1730. His family was not all related to that of Joseph Saurin, of the Academy of Sciences, who is the author of some extracts from the *"Journal des Savans,"* some mathematical memoirs, and the noted "Factum" against Rousseau. Joseph died in 1737.

Scarron, Paul, the son of a counsellor of the great chamber, was born in 1598. His comedies are rather farces than comedies, and *"Virgil Travesti"* could be received only as the work of a buf-

foon. His "Comical Romance" is his only work that is still relished by people of taste, as Boileau predicted. He died in 1660.

Scudéri, Madeleine, was born at Havre in the year 1607. She is better known at the present day by some pretty pieces of poetry, than by the unwieldy romances of "Clélie" and "Cyrus." Louis XIV. treated her with respect, and settled a pension upon her. She gained the first prize for eloquence bestowed by the academy. Her death occurred in 1701.

Sénecai, first valet de chambre to Maria Theresa, was a poet of a singular turn of imagination. His "Tale of Kaimac," take it altogether, displays great genius. It serves to show that very pretty tales may be told in a manner quite different from that of Fontaine. It is observable that this, though the best he wrote, is the only work not to be found in his collection. His *"Travaux d'Apollon"* has also peculiar beauties.

Sévigné, Mary de Rabutin, was born in 1626. Her letters, which are full of anecdotes, and written with freedom and spirit, in a lively style, are the best criticism that can be on your studied letters, in which there is a manifest affectation of wit, and still more on these fictitious letters written to imaginary correspondents, and stuffed with absurd sentiments and adventures in a pretended epistolary style. She died in 1696.

De Torcy, John Baptist Colbert, nephew of the great Colbert, minister of state under Louis XIV., left memoirs of the public transactions from the Peace of Ryswick to that of Utrecht. They were

published, while this essay on the Age of Louis was in the press, and confirm everything advanced in it. They are very minute, and therefore only fit for those that want to be thoroughly acquainted with the subject of them. The style is better than that of any of the memoir writers who were his predecessors. They display the taste of Louis XIV.'s court. But what stamps the highest value on them is the candor and sincerity of the author, which shines through the whole. He died in 1746.

Tristan l'Hermite, gentleman to Gaston of Orleans, brother of Louis XIII. The long and surprising run which his tragedy of "Mariamne" had was owing to the ignorance of the times. They had then no better; and it even held up its head some time after Corneille made his appearance. In some nations, at this day, very indifferent performances pass for masterpieces, because they have had none better. It is not generally known that Tristan turned the office of the virgin into verse, nor is it at all strange that it is not. He died in 1655. Here follows his epitaph:

> A wretched spaniel crouching by his lord,
> I still was poor, and pleaded still disaster;
> I lived in waiting at proud fortune's board;
> And died upon a bench, in waiting on my master.

Le Vayer, Francis, born at Paris in 1588. He was preceptor to Monsieur, brother of Louis XIV., and, during one year, to Louis himself. He was also historiographer of France, and counsellor of state. His skepticism was well known, and yet did not prevent his being entrusted with the important office of educating these princes. Though

his works are too prolix, yet there is a great deal of just reasoning and learning in them. He was certainly the most learned member of the Academy. His skepticism is bolder and more undisguised than that of Bayle, and he is more severe and cynical in his satire. His motto was,

> Of all those maxims deemed secure,
> The most secure is still to doubt.

As that of Montaigne, *"Que sais-je?"* "What know I?" He died in 1672.

Veyssière, Mathurin de Lacroze, was born at Nantes in 1661. He was a Benedictine at Paris. Being a free-thinker, and his superior of a quite different character, he resolved to quit both his order and his religion. He was a prodigy both for learning and for memory. Not content with studying and understanding what was useful and agreeable, he must needs study what could not be known, such as the ancient Egyptian language. One piece that he wrote, on the "Christianity of the Indies," is much esteemed. There is one remarkable thing that we learn from it, and that is, that the Brahmins, notwithstanding the idolatry of the people, believe that there is but one God. Such is the itch for writing, that a life of this man has been published, making a volume as large as that of Alexander. Such an extract as this would have been enough, and too much. He died at Berlin in 1739.

Villedieu, Madame de. Her romances have gained her a reputation. But I would not have the reader think that I set any value upon that inundation of romances with which France has been

lately overflowed. Almost all of them, except "*Zaid*," are the productions of persons of no genius, who wrote in an easy agreeable style things unworthy the notice of men of sense. Most of them are quite destitute of imagination, and though read and admired by young people, whose taste they spoil, they are not worth, all together, four pages of Ariosto. She died in 1683.

Voiture, Vincent, born at Amiens in 1598, was the first Frenchman who was what is called in France a *bel esprit*. His writings have little else to recommend them, and yet they are not proper models to form our taste upon; but wit was then a rare thing. He wrote some very pretty bits of poetry, but nothing considerable.

HON. JOHN MORLEY

A BIOGRAPHICAL CRITIQUE

OF

VOLTAIRE

BY

JOHN MORLEY

Vol. XXI—Part II

The Right Honorable John Morley was born in Lancashire, England, in 1838. He edited the *Fortnightly Review* from 1867 until 1882, and the "English Men of Letters" series. His literary fame was established by his masterly and courageous works, "Voltaire" (1872); "Rousseau" (1876); "Diderot and the Encyclopædists" (1878); and "On Compromise" (1874). Other studies, literary and biographical, are included in his collected writings. He entered the House of Commons in 1883 as an independent Radical and served under Mr. Gladstone as Secretary for Ireland. Mr. Morley was chosen by the family to write the Life of his former distinguished leader.

VOLTAIRE.

CHAPTER I.

THE IDEAL MAN FOR THE TIME.

When the right sense of historical proportion is more fully developed in men's minds, the name of Voltaire will stand out like the names of the great decisive movements in the European advance, like the Revival of Learning, or the Reformation. The existence, character, and career of this extraordinary person constituted in themselves a new and prodigious era. The peculiarities of his individual genius changed the mind and spiritual conformation of France, and in a less degree that of the whole of the West, with as far-spreading and invincible an effect as if the work had been wholly done, as it was actually aided, by the sweep of deep-lying collective forces. A new type of belief, and of its shadow, disbelief, was stamped by the impression of his character and work into the intelligence and feeling of his own and the following times. We may think of Voltairism in France somewhat as we think of Catholicism or the Renaissance or Calvinism. It was one of the cardinal liberations of the growing race, one

of the emphatic manifestations of some portion of the minds of men, which an immediately foregoing system and creed had either ignored or outraged.

Christianity originally and generically at once awoke and satisfied a spiritual craving for a higher, purer, less torn and fragmentary being than is permitted to sons of men on the troubled and corrupt earth. It disclosed to them a gracious, benevolent and all-powerful being, who would one day redress all wrongs and recompense all pain, and who asked no more from them meanwhile than that they should prove their love of Him whom they had not seen, by love of their brothers whom they had seen. Its great glory was to have raised the moral dignity and self-respect of the many to a level which had hitherto been reached only by a few. Calvin, again, like some stern and austere stepson of the Christian God, jealous of the divine benignity and abused open-handedness of his Father's house, with word of merciless power set free all those souls that were more anxious to look the tremendous facts of necessity and evil and punishment full in the face than to reconcile them with any theory of the infinite mercy and loving kindness of a supreme Creator. Men who had been enervated or helplessly perplexed by a creed that had sunk into ignoble optimism and self-indulgence, became conscious of new fibre in their moral structure, when they realized life as a long wrestling with unseen and invincible forces of grace, election, and fore-destiny, the agencies of a being

whose ways and dealings, whose contradictory attributes of unjust justice and loving vindictiveness, it was not for man, who is a worm and the son of a worm, to reconcile with the puny logic of human words, or the shallow consistency of human ideas. Catholicism was a movement of mysticism, and so in darker regions was the Calvinism which in so many important societies displaced it. Each did much to raise the measure of worth and purify the spiritual self-respect of mankind, and each also discouraged and depressed the liberal play of intelligence, the cheerful energizing of reason, the bright and many-sided workings of fancy and imagination. Human nature, happily for us, ever presses against this system or that, and forces ways of escape for itself into freedom and light. The scientific reason urgently seeks instruments and a voice; the creative imagination unconsciously takes form to itself in manifold ways, of all which the emotions can give good account to the understanding. Hence the glorious suffusion of light which the ardent desire of men brought over the face of Europe in the latter half of the fifteenth century. Before Luther and Calvin in their separate ways brought into splendid prominence their new ideas of moral order, more than two generations of men had almost ceased to care whether there be any moral order or not, and had plunged with the delight of enchantment among ideas of grace and beauty, whose forms were old on the earth, but which were full of seemingly inex-

haustible novelty and freshness to men, who had once begun to receive and to understand all the ever-living gifts of Grecian art, architecture, and letters. If the Reformation, the great revival of northern Europe, was the enfranchisement of the individual from bondage to a collective religious tradition that had lost its virtue, the Renaissance, the earlier revival of southern Europe, was the admission to participate in the noblest collective tradition of free intellect which the achievements of the race could then hand down.

Voltairism may stand for the name of the Renaissance of the eighteenth century, for that name takes in all the serious haltings and shortcomings of this strange movement, as well as all its terrible fire, swiftness, sincerity, and strength. The rays from Voltaire's burning and far-shining spirit no sooner struck upon the genius of the time, seated dark and dead like the black stone of Memnon's statue, than the clang of the breaking chord was heard through Europe, and men awoke in new day and more spacious air. The sentimentalist has proclaimed him a mere mocker. To the critic of the schools, ever ready with compendious label, he is the revolutionary destructive. To each alike of the countless orthodox sects his name is the symbol for the prevailing of the gates of hell. Erudition figures him as shallow and a trifler; culture condemns him for pushing his hatred of spiritual falsehood much too seriously; Christian charity feels constrained to unmask a demon from the depths of the pit. The

plain men of the earth, who are apt to measure the merits of a philosopher by the strength of his sympathy with existing sources of comfort, would generally approve the saying of Dr. Johnson, that he would sooner sign a sentence for Rousseau's transportation than that of any felon who had gone from the Old Bailey these many years, and that the difference between him and Voltaire was so slight that "it would be difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them." Those of all schools and professions who have the temperament which mistakes strong expression for strong judgment, and violent phrase for grounded conviction, have been stimulated by antipathy against Voltaire to a degree that in any of them with latent turns for humor must now and then have even stirred a kind of reacting sympathy. The rank vocabulary of malice and hate, that noisome fringe of the history of opinion, has received many of its most fulminant terms from critics of Voltaire, along with some from Voltaire himself, who unwisely did not always refuse to follow an adversary's bad example.

Yet Voltaire was the very eye of eighteenth-century illumination. It was he who conveyed to his generation in a multitude of forms the consciousness at once of the power and the rights of human intelligence. Another might well have said of him what he magnanimously said of his famous contemporary, Montesquieu, that humanity had lost its title-deeds, and he had recovered them. The fourscore volumes

which he wrote are the monument, as they were in some sort the instrument, of a new renaissance. They are the fruit and representation of a spirit of encyclopædic curiosity and productiveness. Hardly a page of all these countless leaves is common form. Hardly a sentence is there which did not come forth alive from Voltaire's own mind, or which was said because some one else had said it before. His works, as much as those of any man that ever lived and thought, are truly his own. It is not given, we all know, even to the most original and daring of leaders, to be without precursors, and Voltaire's march was prepared for him before he was born, as it is for all mortals. Yet he impressed on all he said, on good words and bad alike, a marked autochthonic quality, as of the self-raised spontaneous products of some miraculous soil, from which prodigies and portents spring. Many of his ideas were in the air, and did not belong to him peculiarly; but so strangely rapid and perfect was his assimilation of them, so vigorous and minutely penetrative was the quality of his understanding, so firm and independent his initiative, that even these were instantly stamped with the express image of his personality. In a word, Voltaire's work from first to last was alert with unquenchable life. Some of it, much of it, has ceased to be alive for us now in all that belongs to its deeper significance, yet we recognize that none of it was ever the dreary still-birth of a mind of hearsays. There is no mechanical transmission of untested bits

of current coin. In the realm of mere letters, Voltaire is one of the little band of great monarchs, and in style he remains of the supreme potentates. But literary variety and perfection, however admirable, like all purely literary qualities, are a fragile and secondary good which the world is very willing to let die, where it has not been truly begotten and engendered of living forces.

Voltaire was a stupendous power, not only because his expression was incomparably lucid, or even because his sight was exquisitely keen and clear, but because he saw many new things, after which the spirits of others were unconsciously groping and dumbly yearning. Nor was this all. Fontenelle was both brilliant and far-sighted, but he was cold, and one of those who love ease and a safe hearth, and carefully shun the din, turmoil, and danger of the great battle. Voltaire was ever in the front and centre of the fight. His life was not a mere chapter in a history of literature. He never counted truth a treasure to be discreetly hidden in a napkin. He made it a perpetual war-cry and emblazoned it on a banner that was many a time rent, but was never out of the field.

This is the temper which, when the times are auspicious, and the fortunes of the fight do not hurry the combatant to dungeon or stake, raises him into a force instead of leaving him the empty shadow of a literary name. There is something in our nature which leads men to listen coolly to the most eager

hints and pregnant innuendoes of skepticism, on the lips of teachers who still in their own persons keep adroitly away from the fiery darts of the officially orthodox. The same something, perhaps a moral relish for veritable proofs of honesty, perhaps a quality of animal temperament, drives men to grasp even a crudity with fervor, when they see it wielded like a battle-axe against spiritual oppression. A man is always so much more than his words, as we feel every day of our lives; what he says has its momentum indefinitely multiplied, or reduced to nullity, by the impression that the hearer for good reasons or bad happens to have formed of the spirit and moral size of the speaker. There are things enough to be said of Voltaire's moral size, and no attempt is made in these pages to dissemble in how much he was condemnable. It is at least certain that he hated tyranny, that he refused to lay up his hatred privily in his heart, and insisted on giving his abhorrence a voice, and tempering for his just rage a fine sword, very fatal to those who laid burdens too hard to be borne upon the conscience and life of men. Voltaire's contemporaries felt this. They were stirred to the quick by the sight and sound and thorough directness of those ringing blows. The strange and sinister method of assault upon religion which we of a later day watch with wondering eyes, and which consists in wearing the shield and device of a faith, and industriously shouting the cry of a church, the more effectually to reduce the faith to a vague futil-

ity, and its outward ordering to a piece of ingeniously reticulated pretence; this method of attack might make even the champions of prevailing beliefs long for the shrewd trusts, the flashing scorn, the relentless fire, the downright grapples, with which the hated Voltaire pushed on his work of "crushing the Infamous." If he was bitter, he was still correct. If he was often a mocker in form, he was always serious in meaning and laborious in matter. If he was unflinching against theology, he always paid religion respect enough to treat it as the most important of all subjects. The contest was real, and not our present pantomimic stage-play, in which muffled phantoms of debate are made to gesticulate inexpressible things in portentously significant silence. The battle was demoralized by its virulence. True; but is this worse than to have it demoralized by cowardice of heart and understanding, when each controversial man-at-arms is eager to have it thought that he wears the colors of the other side, when the theologian would fain pass for rationalist, and the freethinker for a person with his own orthodoxies if you only knew them, and when philosophic candor and intelligence are supposed to have hit their final climax in the doctrine that everything is both true and false at the same time?

A man like Montaigne, as has been said, could slumber tranquilly on the pillow of doubt, content to live his life, leaving many questions open. Such men's meditations, when composed in the genial

literary form proper to them, are naturally the delight of people with whom the world goes fairly well materially, who have sensibility enough to be aware that there are unseen lands of knowledge and truth beyond the present, and destinies beyond their own; but whose sensibility is not intense and ardent enough to make wholly unendurable to them unscrutinizing acquiescence in half-thoughts and faint guesses, and pale unshapen embryos of social sympathy. There are conjunctures when this mingling of apprehension and ease, of aspiration and content, of timorous adventure and reflective indolence is the natural mood of even high natures. The great tides of circumstance swell so tardily that whole generations, that might have produced their share of skilful and intrepid mariners, wait in vain for the full flood on which the race is borne to new shores.

Nor assuredly is it well for men that every age should mark either a revolution, or the slow inward agitation that prepares the revolution, or that doubters and destroyers should divide between them all admiration and gratitude and sympathy. The violent activity of a century of great change may end in a victory, but it is always a sacrifice. The victory may more than recompense its cost. The sacrifice may repay itself a thousand-fold. It does not always repay itself, as the too neglected list of good causes lost, and noble effort wasted, so abundantly shows. Nor in any case is sacrifice ever an end. Faith and order and steady strong movement are the conditions

which everything wise is directed to perfect and consolidate. But for this process of perfection we need first the meditative, doubting, critical type, and next, the dogmatic destroyer. "In counsel it is good to see dangers," Bacon said; "and in execution not to see them, except they be very great." There are, as history instructs us, eras of counsel and eras of execution; the hour when those do best who walk most warily, feeling with patience and sagacity and painstaking for the new ways, and then the hour of march and stout-hearted engagement.

Voltaire, if he adroitly or sagely preserved his buckler, felt that the day was come to throw away the scabbard; that it was time to trust firmly to the free understanding of men for guidance in the voyage after truth, and to the instincts of uncorrupted benevolence in men for the upholding of social justice. His was one of the robust and incisive constitutions, to which doubt figures as a sickness, and where intellectual apprehension is an impossibility. The old-fashioned nomenclature puts him down among skeptics, because those who had the official right to affix these labels could think of no more contemptuous name, and could not suppose the most audacious soul capable of advancing even under the leadership of Satan himself beyond a stray doubt or so. He had perhaps as little of the skeptic in his constitution as Bossuet or Butler, and was much less capable of becoming one than de Maistre or Paley. This was a prime secret of his

power, for the mere critic and propounder of unanswered doubts never leads more than a handful of men after him. Voltaire boldly put the great question, and he boldly answered it. He asked whether the sacred records were historically true, the Christian doctrine divinely inspired and spiritually exhaustive, and the Christian church a holy and beneficent organization. He answered these questions for himself and for others beyond possibility of misconception. The records were saturated with fable and absurdity, the doctrine imperfect at its best, and a dark and tyrannical superstition at its worst, and the Church was the arch-curse and infamy. Say what we will of these answers, they were free from any taint of skepticism. Our lofty new idea of rational freedom as freedom from conviction, and of emancipation of understanding as emancipation from the duty of settling whether important propositions are true or false, had not dawned on Voltaire.

He had just as little part or lot in the complaisant spirit of the man of the world, who from the depths of his mediocrity and ease presumes to promulgate the law of progress, and as dictator to fix its speed. Who does not know this temper of the man of the world, that worst enemy of the world? His inexhaustible patience of abuses that only torment others; his apologetic word for beliefs that may perhaps not be so precisely true as one might wish, and institutions that are not altogether so useful as

some might think possible; his cordiality towards progress and improvement in a general way, and his coldness or antipathy to each progressive proposal in particular; his pygmy hope that life will one day become somewhat better, punily shivering by the side of his gigantic conviction that it might well be infinitely worse. To Voltaire, far different from this, an irrational prejudice was not the object of a polite coldness, but a real evil to be combated and overthrown at every hazard. Cruelty was not to him as a disagreeable dream of the imagination, from thought of which he could save himself by arousing to sense of his own comfort, but a vivid flame burning into his thoughts and destroying peace. Wrongdoing and injustice were not simple words on his lips; they went as knives to the heart; he suffered with the victim, and was consumed with an active rage against the oppressor.

Nor was the coarse cruelty of the inquisitor or the politician, who wrought iniquity by aid of the arm of flesh, the only kind of injury to the world which stirred his passion. He had imagination enough and intelligence enough to perceive that they are the most pestilent of all the enemies of mankind, the sombre hierarchs of misology, who take away the keys of knowledge, thrusting truth down to the second place, and discrowning sovereign reason to be the serving drudge of superstition or social usage. The system which threw obstacles into the way of publishing an exposition of Newton's discoveries

and ideas was as mischievous and hateful to him as the darker bigotry which broke Calas on the wheel because he was a Protestant. To check the energetic discovery and wide propagation of scientific truth, he rightly held to be at least as destructive in the long run to the common weal, as the unjust extermination of human life; for it is the possession of ever more and more truth that makes life ever better worth having and better worth preserving. And must we not admit that he was right, and that no age nor school of men nor individual has ever been mortally afraid, as every good man is afraid, of inflicting any wrong on his fellow, and has not also been afraid of extinguishing a single ray from the great sun of knowledge?

It is well enough to say that in unscientific ages, like the twelfth century for instance, the burner of books and the tormentor of those who wrote them did not feel either that he was doing an injustice to man or a mischief to truth. It is hard to deny that St. Bernard was a good man, nor is it needful that we should deny it; for good motives, owing to our great blindness and slow enlightenment, have made grievous havoc in the world. But the conception of justice towards heretics did not exist, any more than it existed in the mind of a low type of white man towards a black man, or than the conception of pity exists in the mind of a sportsman towards his prey. These were ages of social cruelty, as they were ages of intellectual repression. The debt of each

to his neighbor was as little felt as the debt of all to the common faculties and intelligence. Men owed nothing to man, but everything to the gods. All the social feeling and intellectual effort and human energizing which had made the high idea of God possible and real, seemed to have expended themselves in a creation which instantly swallowed them up and obliterated their recollection. The intelligence which, by its active straining upwards to the light, had opened the way for the one God, became itself forthwith identified with the chief of the devils. He who used his reason was the child of this demon. Where it is a duty to worship the sun, it is pretty sure to be a crime to examine the laws of heat. The times when such was the universal idea of the rights of the understanding were also the times when human life was cheapest, and the tiny bowl of a man's happiness was spilled upon the ground with least compunction.

The companionship between these two ideas of disrespect for the rights of man, and disrespect for reason or the highest distinction of man, has been an inseparable companionship. The converse is unhappily only true with a modification, for there have been too many men with an honorable respect for a demonstration and a proper hospitality towards a probability, who look on the rights of man, without disrespect indeed, but also without fervor. To Voltaire reason and humanity were but a single word, and love of truth and passion for justice but one

emotion. None of the famous men who have fought that they themselves might think freely and speak truly have ever seen more clearly that the fundamental aim of the contest was that others might live happily. Who has not been touched by that admirable word of his, of the three years in which he labored without remission for justice to the widow and descendants of Calas: "*During that time not a smile escaped me without my reproaching myself for it, as for a crime.*" Or by his sincere avowal that of all the words of enthusiasm and admiration which were so prodigally bestowed upon him on the occasion of his last famous visit to Paris in 1778, none went to his heart like that of a woman of the people, who in reply to one asking the name of him whom the crowd followed, gave answer, "*Do you not know that he is the preserver of the Calas?*"

The same kind of feeling, though manifested in ways of much less unequivocal nobleness, was at the bottom of his many efforts to make himself of consequence in important political business. We know how many contemptuous sarcasms have been inspired by his anxiety at various times to perform diplomatic feats of intervention between the French government and Frederick the Second. In 1742, after his visit to the Prussian king at Aix-la-Chapelle, he is supposed to have hinted to Cardinal Fleury that to have written epic and drama does not disqualify a man for serving his king and country on the busy fields of affairs. The following year,

after Fleury's death, when French fortunes in the war of the Austrian succession were near their lowest, Voltaire's own idea that he might be useful from his intimacy with Frederick, seems to have been shared by Amelot, the secretary of state, and at all events he aspired to do some sort of active, if radically futile, diplomatic work. In later times when the tide had turned, and Frederick's star was clouded over with disaster, we again find Voltaire the eager intermediary with Choiseul, pleasantly comparing himself to the mouse of the fable, busily striving to free the lion from the meshes of the hunter's net.

The man of letters, usually unable to conceive loftier services to mankind or more attractive aims to persons of capacity than the composition of books, has treated these pretensions of Voltaire with a supercilious kind of censure, which teaches us nothing about Voltaire, while it implies a particularly shallow idea alike of the position of the mere literary life in the scale of things, and of the conditions under which the best literary work is done. To have really contributed in the humblest degree, for instance, to a peace between Prussia and her enemies in 1759, would have been an immeasurably greater performance for mankind than any given book which Voltaire could have written. And, what is still better worth observing, Voltaire's books would not have been the powers they were, but for this constant desire of his to come into the closest

contact with the practical affairs of the world. He who has never led the life of a recluse, drawing an income from the funds and living in a remote garden, constructing past, present, and future out of his own consciousness, is not qualified either to lead mankind safely, or to think on the course of human affairs correctly. Every page of Voltaire has the bracing air of the life of the world in it, and the instinct which led him to seek the society of the conspicuous actors on the great scene was essentially a right one. The book-writer takes good advantage of his opportunity to assure men expressly or by implication, that he is their true king, and that the sacred bard is a mightier man than his hero. Voltaire knew better. Though himself perhaps the most puissant man of letters that ever lived, he rated literature as it ought to be rated, below action; not because written speech is less of a force, but because the speculation and criticism of the literature that substantially influences the world make far less demand than the actual conduct of great affairs on qualities which are not rare in detail, but are amazingly rare in combination; on temper, foresight, solidity, daring; on strength, in a word, strength of intelligence and strength of character. Gibbon rightly amended his phrase when he described Boethius not as stooping, but rather as rising, from his life of placid meditation to an active share in the imperial business. That he held this sound opinion is quite as plausible an explanation

of Voltaire's anxiety to know persons of station and importance as the current theory that he was of sycophantic nature. Why, he asks, are the ancient historians so full of light? "It is because the writer had to do with public business; it is because he could be magistrate, priest, soldier; and because if he could not rise to the highest functions of the state, he had at least to make himself worthy of them. I admit," he concludes, "that we must not expect such an advantage with us, for our own constitution happens to be against it;" but he was deeply sensible what an advantage it was that they thus lost.

In short, on all sides, whatever men do and think was real and alive to Voltaire. Whatever had the quality of interesting any imaginable temperament, had the quality of interesting him. There was no subject which any set of men have ever cared about, which, if he once had mention of it, Voltaire did not care about likewise. And it was just because he was so thoroughly alive himself, that he filled the whole era with life. The more closely one studies the various movements of that time, the more clear it becomes that, if he was not the original centre and first fountain of them all, at any rate he made many channels ready and gave the sign. He was the initial principle of fermentation throughout that vast commotion. We may deplore, if we think fit, as Erasmus deplored in the case of Luther, that the great change was not allowed to work itself out slowly, calmly, and without violence and disruption.

These graceful regrets are powerless, and on the whole they are very enervating. Let us make our account with the actual, rather than seek excuses for self-indulgence in pensive preference of something that might have been. Practically in these great circles of affairs, what only might have been is as though it could not be; and to know this may well suffice for us. It is not in human power to choose the kind of men who rise from time to time to the supreme control of momentous changes. The force which decides this immensely important matter is as though it were chance. We cannot decisively pronounce any circumstance whatever an accident, yet history abounds with circumstances which in our present ignorance of the causes of things are as if they were accidents.

In this respect history is neither better nor worse than the latest explanation of the origin and order of the world of organized matter. Here, too, we are landed in the final resort at what is neither more nor less than an accident. Natural selection, or the survival of the fittest in the universal struggle for existence, is now held by the most competent inquirers to be the principal method to which we owe the extinction, preservation, and distribution of organic forms on the earth. But the appearance both of the forms that conquer and of those that perish still remains a secret, and to science an accident and a secret are virtually and provisionally the same thing. In a word, there is an unknown element at the bot-

tom of the varieties of creation, whether we agree to call that element a volition of a supernatural being, or an undiscovered set of facts in embryology. So in history the Roman or Italo-Hellenic empire, rising when it did, was the salvation of the West, and yet the appearance, at the moment when anarchy threatened rapidly to dissolve the Roman state, of a man with the power of conceiving the best design for the new structure seems to partake as much of the nature of chance as the non-appearance of men with similar vision and power in equally momentous crises, earlier and later. The rise of a great constructive chief like Charlemagne in the eighth century can hardly be enough to persuade us that the occasion invariably brings the leader whom its conditions require, when we remember that as concerns their demands the conditions of the end of the eighth century were not radically different from those of the beginning of the sixth, yet that in the earlier epoch there arose no successor to continue the work of Theodoric. We have only to examine the origin and fundamental circumstances of the types of civilization which rule western communities and guide their advance, to discern in those original circumstances a something inscrutable, a certain element of what is as though it were fortuitous. No science can as yet tell us how such a variation from previously existing creatures as man had its origin; nor, any more than this, can history explain the law by which the most striking variations

in intellectual and spiritual quality within the human order have had their origin. The appearance of the one as of the other is a fact which cannot be further resolved. It is hard to think in imagination of the globe as unpeopled by man, or peopled, as it may at some remote day come to be, by beings of capacity superior enough to extinguish man. It is hard also to think of the scene which western Europe and all the vast space which the light of western Europe irradiates, might have offered at this moment, if nature or the unknown forces had not produced a Luther, a Calvin, or a Voltaire.

It was one of the happy chances of circumstance that there arose in France on the death of Louis XIV., a man with all Voltaire's peculiar gifts of intelligence, who added to them an incessant activity in their use, and who besides this enjoyed such length of days as to make his intellectual powers effective to the very fullest extent possible. This combination of physical and mental conditions so amazingly favorable to the spread of the Voltairean ideas was a circumstance independent of the state of the surrounding atmosphere, and was what in the phraseology of prescientific times might well have been called providential. If Voltaire had seen all that he saw, and yet been indolent; or if he had been as clear-sighted and as active as he was, and yet had only lived fifty years, instead of eighty-four, Voltairism would never have struck root. As it was, with his genius, his industry, his longevity, and

the conditions of the time being what they were, that far-spreading movement of destruction was inevitable.

Once more, we cannot choose. Those whom temperament or culture has made the partisans of calm order, cannot attune progress to the stately and harmonious march which would best please them, and which they are perhaps right in thinking would lead with most security to the goal.

Such a liberation of the human mind as Voltairism can be effected only by the movement of many spirits, and they are only the few who are moved by moderate, reflective, and scientific trains of argument. The many need an extreme type. They are struck by what is flashing and colossal, for they follow imagination and sympathy, and not the exactly disciplined intelligence. They know their own wants, and have dumb feeling of their own better aspirations. Their thoughts move in the obscurity of things quick but unborn, and by instinct they push upwards in whatever direction the darkness seems breaking. They are not critics nor analysts, but when the time is ripening they never fail to know the word of freedom and of truth, with whatever imperfections it may chance to be spoken. No prophet all false has ever yet caught the ear of a series of generations. No prophet all false has succeeded in separating a nation into two clear divisions. Voltaire has in effect for a century so divided the most emancipated of western nations. This is

beyond the power of the mere mocker, who perishes like the flash of lightning; he does not abide as a centre of solar heat.

There are more kinds of Voltaireans than one, but no one who has marched ever so short a way out of the great camp of old ideas is directly or indirectly out of the debt and out of the hand of the first liberator, however little willing he may be to recognize one or the other. Attention has been called by every writer on Voltaire to the immense number of the editions of his works, a number probably unparalleled in the case of any author within the same limits of time. Besides being one of the most voluminous book-writers, he is one of the cheapest. We can buy one of Voltaire's books for a few pence, and the keepers of the cheap stalls in the cheap quarters of London and Paris will tell you that this is not from lack of demand, but the contrary. So clearly does that light burn for many even now, which scientifically speaking ought to be extinct, and for many indeed is long ago extinct and superseded. The reasons for this vitality are that Voltaire was himself thoroughly alive when he did his work, and that the movement which that work began is still unexhausted.

How shall we attempt to characterize this movement? The historian of the Christian church usually opens his narrative with an account of the deprivation of human nature and the corruption of society which preceded the new religion. The Reformation

in like manner is only to be understood after we have perceived the enormous mass of superstition, injustice, and wilful ignorance, by which the theological idea had become so incrusted as to be wholly incompetent to guide society, because it was equally repugnant to the intellectual perceptions and the moral sense, the knowledge and the feelings, of the best and most active-minded persons of the time. The same sort of consideration explains and vindicates the enormous power of Voltaire. France had outgrown the system that had brought her through the middle ages. The further development of her national life was fatally hindered by the tight bonds of an old order, which clung with the hardy tenacity of a thriving parasite, diverting from the roots all their sustenance, eating into the tissue, and feeding on the juices of the living tree. The picture has often been painted, and we need not try to paint it once more in detail here. The whole power and ordering of the nation were with the sworn and chartered foes of light, who had every interest that a desire to cling to authority and wealth can give, in keeping the understanding subject.

And, what was more important, there had been no sign made in the nation itself of a consciousness of the immense realms of knowledge that lay immediately in front of it, and still less of any desire or intention to win lasting possession of them. That intellectual curiosity which was so soon to produce such amazing fruits was as yet unstirred. An era

of extraordinary activity had just come to a close, and the creative and artistic genius of France had risen to the highest mark it attained until the opening of our own century. The grand age of Louis XIV. had been an age of magnificent literature and unsurpassed eloquence. But, in spite of the potent seed which Descartes had sown, it had been the age of authority, protection, and patronage. Consequently all those subjects for which there was no patronage, that is to say the subjects which could add nothing to the splendor and dignity of the church and the pageantry of the court, were virtually repressed. This ought not to blind us to the real loftiness and magnanimity of the best or earlier part of the age of Louis XIV. It has been said that his best title to the recollection of posterity is the protection he extended to Molière; and one reason why this was so meritorious is that Molière's work had a markedly critical character, in reference both to the devout and to the courtier. The fact of this, undoubtedly the most durable work of that time, containing critical quality, is not of importance in reference to the generally fixed or positive aspect of the age. For Molière is only critical by accident. There is nothing organically negative about him, and his plays are the pure dramatic presentation of a peculiar civilization. He is no more a destructive agency because he drew hypocrites and coxcombs, than Bousset was destructive or critical because he inveighed against sin and the excess of human vain-

glory. The epoch was one of entire loyalty to itself and its ideas. Voltaire himself perceived and admired these traits to the full. The greatest of all overthrowers, he always understood that it is towards such ages as these, the too short ages of conviction and self-sufficience, that our endeavor works. We fight that others may enjoy; and many generations struggle and debate, that one generation may hold something for proven.

The glories of the age of Louis XIV. were the climax of a set of ideas that instantly afterwards lost alike their grace, their usefulness, and the firmness of their hold on the intelligence of men. A dignified and venerable hierarchy, an august and powerful monarch, a court of gay and luxurious nobles, all lost their grace, because the eyes of men were suddenly caught and appalled by the awful phantom, which was yet so real, of a perishing nation. Turn from Bousset's orations to Bois-Guilbert's "*Détail de la France;*" from the pulpit rhetorician's courtly reminders that even majesty must die, to Vauban's pity for the misery of the common people; from Corneille and Racine to La Bruyère's picture of "certain wild animals, male and female, scattered over the fields, black, livid, all burnt by the sun, bound to the earth that they dig and work with unconquerable pertinacity; they have a sort of articulate voice, and when they rise on their feet, they show a human face, and, in fact, are men." The contrast had existed for generations. The material

misery caused by the wars of the great Louis deepened the dark side, and the lustre of genius consecrated to the glorification of traditional authority and the order of the hour heightened the brightness of the bright side, until the old contrast was suddenly seen by a few startled eyes, and the new and deepest problem, destined to strain our civilization to a degree that not many have even now conceived, came slowly into pale outline.

There is no reason to think that Voltaire ever saw this gaunt and tremendous spectacle. Rousseau was its first voice. Since him the reorganization of the relations of men has never faded from the sight either of statesmen or philosophers, with vision keen enough to admit to their eyes even what they dreaded and execrated in their hearts. Voltaire's task was different and preparatory. It was to make popular the genius and authority of reason. The foundations of the social fabric were in such a condition that the touch of reason was fatal to the whole structure, which instantly began to crumble. Authority and use oppose a steadfast and invincible resistance to reason, so long as the institutions which they protect are of fair practicable service to a society. But after the death of Louis XIV., not only the grace and pomp, but also the social utility of spiritual and political absolutism passed obviously away. Spiritual absolutism was unable to maintain even a decent semblance of unity and theological order. Political absolutism, by its material costliness, its

augmenting tendency to repress the application of individual energy and thought to public concerns, and its pursuit of a policy in Europe which was futile and essentially meaningless as to its ends, and disastrous and incapable in its choice of means, was rapidly exhausting the resources of national well-being and viciously severing the very tap-root of national life. To bring reason into an atmosphere so charged was, as the old figure goes, to admit air to the chamber of the mummy. And reason was exactly what Voltaire brought; too narrow, if we will, too contentious, too derisive, too unmitigatedly reasonable, but still reason. And who shall measure the consequence of this difference in the history of two great nations; that in France absolutism in Church and State fell before the sinewy genius of stark reason, while in England it fell before a respect for social convenience, protesting against monopolies, benevolences, ship-money? That in France speculation had penetrated over the whole field of social inquiry, before a single step had been taken towards application, while in England social principles were applied, before they received any kind of speculative vindication? That in France the first effective enemy of the principles of despotism was Voltaire, poet, philosopher, historian, critic; in England, a band of homely squires?

Traditional authority, it is true, had been partially and fatally undermined in France before the time of Voltaire, by one of the most daring of thinkers, and

one of the most acute and skeptical of scholars, as well as by writers so acutely careless as Montaigne, and apologists so dangerously rational as Pascal, who gave a rank and consistency to doubt even in showing that its seas were black and shoreless. Descartes' "Discourse on Method" had been published in 1637, and Bayle's "Thoughts on the Comet," first of the series of critical onslaughts on prejudice and authority in matters of belief, had been published in 1682. The metaphysician and the critic had each pressed forward on the path of examination, and had each insisted on finding grounds for belief, or else showing the absence of such grounds with a fatal distinctness that made belief impossible. Descartes was constructive, and was bent on reconciling the acceptance of a certain set of ideas as to the relations between man and the universe, and as to the mode and composition of the universe, with the logical reason. Bayle, whose antecedents and environment were Protestant, was careless to replace, but careful to have evidence for whatever was allowed to remain. No parallel nor hint of equality is here intended between the rare genius of Descartes and the relatively lower quality of Bayle. The one, however high a place we may give to the regeneration of thought effected by Bacon in England, or to that wrought by the brilliant group of physical experimentalists in Italy, still marks a new epoch in the development of the human mind, for he had decisively separated knowledge from theology, and sys-

tematically constituted science. The other has a place only in the history of criticism. But, although in widely different ways, and with vast difference in intellectual stature, they both had touched the prevailing notions of French society with a fatal breath.

The blast that finally dispersed and destroyed them came not from Descartes and Bayle, but directly from Voltaire and indirectly from England. In the seventeenth century the surrounding conditions were not ripe. Social needs had not begun to press. The organs of authority were still too vigorous, and performed their functions with something more than the mechanical half-heartedness of the next century. Long familiarity with skeptical ideas as enemies must go before their reception as friends and deliverers. They have perhaps never gained an effective hold in any community, until they have found allies in the hostile camp of official orthodoxy, and so long as that orthodoxy was able to afford them a vigorous social resistance. Voltaire's universal talents made one of the most powerful instruments for conveying these bold and inquisitive notions among many sorts and conditions of men, including both the multitude of common readers and playgoers in the town, and the narrower multitude of nobles and sovereigns. More than this, the brilliance and variety of his gifts attracted, stimulated, and directed the majority of the men of letters of his time, and imparted to them

a measure of his own singular skill in conveying the principles of rationalistic thought.

The effect of all this was to turn a vast number of personages who were officially inimical to free criticism, to be at heart abettors and fellow-conspirators in the great plot. That fact, combined with the independent causes of the incompetency of the holders of authority to deal with the crying social necessities of the time, left the walls of the citadel undermined and undefended, and a few of the sacred birds that were still found faithful cackled to no purpose. It has often been said that in the early times of Christianity its influence gave all that was truest and brightest in color to the compositions of those who were least or not at all affected by its dogma. It is more certain that Voltaire by the extraordinary force of his personality gave a peculiar tone and life even to those who adhered most staunchly to the ancient ordering. The champions of authority were driven to defend their cause by the unusual weapons of rationality; and if Voltaire had never written, authority would never, for instance, have found such a soldier on her side as that most able and eminent of reactionaries, Joseph de Maistre. In reply to the favorite assertion of the apologists of Catholicism, that whatever good side its assailants may present is the product of the very teaching which they repudiate, one can only say that there would be at least as much justice in maintaining that the marked improvement which took place in the character and

aims of the priesthood between the Regency and the Revolution, was an obligation unconsciously incurred to those just and liberal ideas which Voltaire had helped so powerfully to spread. De Maistre compares Reason putting away Revelation to a child who should beat its nurse. The same figure would serve just as well to describe the thanklessness of Belief to the Disbelief which has purged and exalted it.

There is another kind of opinion that is as little merciful in its own way as either of the two others, and this is the scientific or cultured opinion. Objections from this region express themselves in many forms, some of them calm and suggestive, others a little empty and a little brutal. They all seem to come to something of this kind: that Voltaire's assault on religion, being conducted without even the smallest spark of religious spirit, was therefore necessarily unjust to the object of his attack, and did the further mischief of engendering in all on whom his influence was poured out a bitterness and moral temerity which is the worst blight that can fall upon the character either of a man or a generation: that while truth is relative and conditional, and while belief is only to be understood by those who have calmly done justice to the history of its origin and growth, Voltaire carelessly, unphilosophically, and maliciously handled what had once possessed a relative truth, as if it had always been absolutely false, and what had sprung from the views and

aspirations of the best men, as if it had had its root in the base artifices of the worst: that what ought to have gone on, and would have gone on, as a process of soft autumnal dissolution, was converted by the infection of Voltaire into a stained scene of passion and battle: that assuming to possess and to furnish men with a broad criticism of life, he left out of life its deepest, holiest, and most exalting elements, as well as narrowed and depraved criticism, from its right rank as the high art of stating and collating ideas, down to an acrid trick of debate, a thing of proofs, arguments, and rancorous polemic.

It is certain that there is much truth in this particular strain of objection to Voltaire's power and his use of it, or else it would not have found mouthpieces, as it has done, among some of the finest spirits of the modern time. But it is the natural tendency of the hour rather to exaggerate what weight there really is in such criticism, which, though claiming to be the criticism of temperance and moderation and relativity, does not as a matter of fact escape the fatal law of excess and absoluteness even in its very moderation and relativity. In estimating an innovator's method, all depends on the time and the enemy; and it may sometimes happen that the time is so out of joint and the enemy so strong, so unscrupulous, so imminently pernicious, as to leave no alternative between finally succumbing, and waging a war of deliverance for which coming generations have to bear the burdens in feuds and bitterness;

between abridging somewhat of the richness and fulness of life, and allowing it all to be gradually choked up by dust and enwrapped in night. For let us not forget that what Catholicism was accomplishing in France in the first half of the eighteenth century, was really not anything less momentous than the slow strangling of French civilization. Though Voltaire's spirit may be little edifying to us, who after all partake of the freedom which he did so much to win, yet it is only just to remember what was the spirit of his foe, and that in so pestilent a presence a man of direct vision may well be eager to use such weapons as he finds to his hand. Let the scientific spirit move people to speak as it lists about Voltaire's want of respect for things held sacred, for the good deeds of holy men, for the sentiment and faith of thousands of the most worthy among his fellows. Still there are times when it may be very questionable whether, in the region of belief, one with power and with fervid honesty ought to spare the abominable city of the plain, just because it happens to shelter five righteous. There are times when the inhumanity of a system stands out so red and foul, when the burden of its iniquity weighs so heavy, and the contagion of its hypocrisy is so laden with mortal plague, that no awe of dilettante condemnation nor minute scruple as to the historic or the relative can stay the hand of the man whose direct sight and moral energy have pierced the veil of use, and revealed the shrine of the infamous thing.

The most noble of the holy men said long ago that "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." The history of the churches is in one of its most conspicuous aspects the history of a prolonged outrage upon these words by arrogant and blasphemous persons, pretending to draw a sacred spirit from the very saint who uttered them. We may well deplore that Voltaire's attack, and every other attack of the same sort, did not take the fair shape prescribed by the apostle to the servant of the Lord, of gentleness, patience, and the instruction of a sweet and firm example. But the partisans of the creed in whose name more human blood has been violently shed than in any other cause whatever, these, I say, can hardly find much ground of serious reproach in a few score epigrams. Voltaire had no calm breadth of wisdom. It may be so. There are moments which need not this calm breadth of wisdom, but a two-edged sword, and when the deliverers of mankind are they who "come to send fire on the earth."

CHAPTER II.

ENGLISH STUDIES AND INFLUENCES.

Voltairism may be said to have begun from the flight of its founder from Paris to London. This, to borrow a name from the most memorable instance of outward change marking inward revolution, was the decisive hegira, from which the philosophy of destruction in a formal shape may be held seriously to date. Voltaire landed in England in the middle of May, 1726. He was in the thirty-third year of his age, that earlier climacteric, when the men with vision first feel conscious of a past, and reflectively mark its shadow. It is then that they either press forward eagerly with new impulse in the way of their high calling, knowing the limitations of circumstance and hour, or else fainting draw back their hand from the plough, and ignobly leave to another or to none the accomplishment of the work. The narrowness of the cribbed deck that we are doomed to tread, amid the vast space of an eternal sea with fair shores dimly seen and never neared, oppresses the soul with a burden that sorely tries its strength,

when the fixed limits first define themselves before it. Those are the strongest who do not tremble beneath this gray ghostly light, but make it the precursor of an industrious day.

The past on which Voltaire had to look back was full of turmoil, contention, impatience, and restless production. François Marie Arouet was born in 1694, so feeble in constitution that, as in the case of Fontenelle, whose hundred years surpassed even Voltaire's lengthy span, his life was long despaired of. His father was a notary of good repute for integrity and skill, and was entrusted with the management of their affairs by several of the highest families in France. His mother is supposed to have had some of the intellectual alertness which penetrated the character of her son, but she died when he was seven years old, and he remained alone with his father until 1704, when he was sent to school. His instructors at the Collège Louis-le-Grand were the Jesuits, whose wise devotion to intellectual education in the broadest sense that was then possible, is a partial set-off against their mischievous influence on morals and politics. The hardihood of the young Arouet's temper broke out even from the first, and we need not inquire minutely what were the precise subjects of education of a child, whom his tutor took an early opportunity of pointing out as the future coryphæus of deism in France. He used to say in after life that he had learnt nothing worth learning. A lad who could launch infidel epigrams at "his

Jansenist of a brother," and declaim a poem in which so important a hero as Moses figures as an impostor, was of that originality of mental turn on whose freedom the inevitably mechanical instruction of the school cannot be expected to make any deep or decisive impression. The young of this independent humor begin their education where those of less energetic nerve hardly leave off, with character ready made.

Between a youth of bold, vivacious, imaginative disposition, and a father of the temperament proper to a notary with many responsibilities, there could be no sympathy, and the two were not long in coming to open quarrel without terms. The son was taken out by his godfather, the Abbé Châteauneuf, into that gay world which presently became the infamous world of the regency, where extraordinary sprightliness and facility in verse gained him welcome and patronage. We need waste no words on the corruption and intellectual trifling of the society into which Voltaire was thus launched. For shallowness and levity, concealed by literary artifice and play of frivolous wit which only makes the scene more dreary or detestable, it has never been surpassed. There was brightness in it, compared with the heavy brutality and things obscene of the court of Louis XV., but after all we seem to see over the brightness a sort of foul glare, like the iridescence of putrefaction. Ninon de l'Enclos, a friend of his mother's, was perhaps the one free and honest soul

with whom the young Arouet had to do. Now extremely old, she still preserved both her wit and her fine probity of intellect. She had always kept her heart free of cant, from the time when she had ridiculed, as the Jansenists of love, the pedantic women and platonic gallants of the Hôtel Rambouillet, down to her rejection of Madame de Maintenon's offer of an invitation to the court, on condition of her joining the band of the devout. The veteran Aspasia, now over eighty, was struck by the brilliance and dazzling promise of the young versifier, and left him a legacy for the purchase of books.

The rest of the society into which Voltaire was taken was saturated with a spirit of reaction against the austere bigotry of the court, and bad and miserable as such austerity is, the rebellion against it is always worse and more miserable still. The licence seems not to have been of the most joyous sort, as indeed licence protesting and defiant is not apt to be. The Abbé Chaulieu, a versifier of sprightly fancy, grace, and natural ease, was the dissolute Anacreon of the people of quality who during the best part of the reign of Louis XIV. had failed to sympathize with its nobility and stateliness, and during the worst part revolted against its gloom. Voltaire at twenty was his intimate and his professed disciple. To this intimacy we may perhaps trace that remarkable continuity of tradition between Voltaire and the grand age, which distinguishes him from the school of famous men who were called

Voltaireans, and of whom the special mark was that they had absolutely broken with the whole past of French history and literature. Princes, dukes, and marquises were of Chaulieu's band. The despair and fury of the elder Arouet at such companions and such follies reproduce once more a very old story in the records of youthful genius. Genius and fine friends reconcile no prudent notary to a son's hatred for law and the desk. Orgies with the Duke of Sully, and rhyming bouts with Chaulieu, have sunk into small size for us, who know that they were but the mischievous and unbecoming prologue of a life of incessant and generous labor, but we may well believe that such enormities bulked big in the vision of the father, as portents of degradation and ruin. We have a glimpse of the son's temper towards the profession to which his father had tried so hard to bind him, in the ironical definition, thrown out long afterwards, of an *avocat* as a man who, not having money enough to buy one of those brilliant offices on which the universe has its eyes fixed, studies for three years the laws of Theodosius and Justinian so as to know the custom of Paris, and who at length having got matriculated has the right of pleading for money, if he has a loud voice. The young Arouet did actually himself get matriculated and acquire this right, but his voice proved so loud that his pleadings were destined to fill wider courts than those of Paris.

Arouet the elder persuaded Châteauneuf's brother,

who was a diplomatist, to take into his company the law-student who had made verse instead of studying the laws of Theodosius. So the youth went to the Hague. Here he straightway fell into new misadventure by conceiving an undying passion, that lasted several weeks, for a young countrywoman whom he found in Holland. Stolen interviews, letters, tears, and the other accustomed circumstances of a juvenile passion on which the gods frown, were all discovered. The ambassador sent the refractory boy back to his father, with full details and documents, with results on the relations of the pair that need not be described.

In the autumn of 1715 Louis XIV. died, and the Regent D'Orleans reigned in his stead. There presently appeared some pungent lines, entitled "*Les j'ai vu,*" in which the writer recounted a number of evil things which he had seen in the state—a thousand prisons crowded with brave citizens and faithful subjects, the people groaning under rigorous bondage, the magistrates harassing every town with ruinous taxes and unrighteous edicts; *j'ai vu, c'est dire tout, le Jésuite adore.* The last line ran that all these ills the writer had seen, yet was but twenty years old. Voltaire was twenty-two, but the authorities knew him for a verse-writer of biting turn, so they treated the discrepancy of age as a piece of mere prosopopœia, and laid him up in the Bastille (1716). As a matter of fact, he had no hand in the offence. Even amid these sombre shades, where he

was kept for nearly a year, his spirit was blithe and its fire unquenchable. The custom of Paris and the Codes were as little handled as ever; and he divided his time between the study of the two great epics of Greece and Rome, and the preparation of what he designed to be the great epic of France. He also gave the finishing strokes to his tragedy of "*Œdipe*," which was represented in the course of the following year with definite success, and was the opening of a brilliant dramatic career, that perhaps to a mortal of more ordinary mould might alone have sufficed for the glory of a life.

The next six years he divided between a lively society, mostly of the great, the assiduous composition of new plays, and the completion of the "*Henriade*." His fibre was gradually strengthening. By the end of this period, the recklessness of the boyish disciple of Chaulieu had wholly spent itself; and although Voltaire's manner of life was assuredly not regular nor decorously ordered, now nor for many years to come, if measured by the rigid standard on which an improved society properly insists, yet it was always a life of vigorous industry and clear purposes. For a brief time his passion for the Maréchale de Villars broke the tenacity of his diligence, and he always looked back on this interruption of his work with the kind of remorse that might afflict a saint for a grave spiritual backsliding. He was often at the country seats of Sully, Villars, and elsewhere, throwing off thousands of trifling verses, arranging

theatricals, enlivening festivals, and always corresponding indefatigably; for now and throughout his life his good sense and good-will, his business-like quality and his liking for his friends, both united to raise him above the idle pretences and self-indulgence of those who neglect the chief instrument of social intercourse and friendly continuity. He preferred the country to the town. "I was born," he says to one, "to be a faun or creature of the woods; I am not made to live in a town." To another, "I fancy myself in hell, when I am in the accursed city of Paris." The only recommendation of the accursed city was that a solitude was attainable in it, as in other crowded spots, which enabled him to work better there than in the small and exacting throng of country-houses. "I fear Fontainebleau, Villars, and Sully, both for my health and for Henry IV.; I should do no work, I should over-eat, and I should lose in pleasures and in complaisance to others an amount of precious time that I ought to be using for a necessary and creditable task."

Yet there was even at this period much of that marvellous hurrying to and fro in France and out of it, which continued to mark the longer portion of Voltaire's life, and fills it with such a busy air of turmoil and confusion, explaining many things, when we think of the stability of life and permanence of outward place of the next bright spirit that shone upon Europe. Goethe never saw London, Paris, nor Vienna, and made no journey save the famous visit

to Italy, and the march at Valmy. Voltaire moved hither and thither over the face of Europe like the wind, and it is not until he has passed through half of his life that we can begin to think of his home. Every association that belongs to his name recalls tumult and haste and shrill contention with men and circumstance. We have, however, to remember that these constant movements were the price which Voltaire paid for the vigor and freedom of his speech, in days when the party of superstition possessed the ear of the temporal power, and resorted without sparing to the most violent means of obliterating every hardy word and crushing every independent writer. The greater number of Voltaire's ceaseless changes of place were flights from injustice, and the recollection of this may well soothe the disturbance of spirit of the most fastidious zealot for calm and orderly living. They were for the most part retreats before packs of wolves.

In 1722 the elder Arouet died, to the last relentlessly set against a son, not any less stubborn than himself, and unfortunately a great deal more poetical. About the same time the name of Arouet falls away, and the poet is known henceforth by that ever famous symbol for so much, Voltaire; a name for which various explanations, none of them satisfactory, have been offered, the latest and perhaps the least improbable resolving it into a fanciful anagram.

Industrious as he was, and eager as he was for

rural delights and laborious solitude, Voltaire was still pre-eminently social. His letters disclose in him, who really possessed all arts, the art of one who knew how to be graciously respectful to the social superiors who took him for a companion, without forgetting what was due to his own respect for himself. "We are all princes or poets," he exclaimed jubilantly on the occasion of one of those nights and suppers of the gods. Such gay-hearted freedom was not always well taken, and in time Voltaire's eyes were opened to the terms on which he really stood. "*Who is the young man who talks so loud?*" called out some Chevalier Rohan, at one of these sprightly gatherings at the house of the Duke of Sully. "*My lord,*" the young man replied promptly, "*he is one who does not carry about a great name, but wins respect for the name he has.*" A few days afterwards the high-spirited patrician magnanimously took an opportunity of having a caning inflicted by the hands of his lackeys on the poet who had thrown away this lesson upon him. Voltaire, who had at all events that substitute for true physical courage which springs up in an intensely irritable and susceptible temperament, forthwith applied himself to practise with the small-sword. He did his best to sting his enemy to fight, but the chevalier either feared the swordsman, or else despised an antagonist of the middle class; and by the influence of the Rohan family the poet once more found himself in the Bastille, then the house of correction at the

disposal and for the use of the nobles, the court, and the clergy. Here for six months Voltaire, then only representing a very humble and unknown quantity in men's minds, chafed and fretted. The pacific Fleury, as is the wont of the pacific when in power, cared less to punish the wrong-doer than to avoid disturbance, knowing that disturbance was most effectually avoided by not meddling with the person most able to resent. The multitude, however, when the day of reckoning came, remembered all these things, and the first act of their passion was to raze to the ground the fortress into which nearly every distinguished champion of the freedom of human intelligence among them had at one time or another been tyrannically thrown.

On his release Voltaire was ordered to leave Paris. A clandestine visit to the city showed him that there was no hope of redress from authority, which was in the hands of men whose pride of rank prevented them from so much as even perceiving, much more from repairing, such grievance as a mere bourgeois could have: as if, to borrow Condorcet's bitter phrase, a descendant of the conquering Franks, like de Rohan, could have lost the ancient right of life and death over a descendant of the Gauls. And this was no ironic taunt; for while Voltaire was in the Bastille, that astounding book of the Count of Boulainvilliers was in the press, in which it was shown that the feudal system is the master-work of the human mind, and that the advance of the royal

authority and the increase of the liberties of the people were equally unjust usurpations of the rights of the conquering Franks.

Voltaire was no patient victim of the practice which corresponded to this trim historic theory. In a tumult of just indignation he quitted France, and sought refuge with that stout and free people, who had by the execution of one king, the deposition of another, and the definite subjugation of the hierarchy, won a full liberty of thought and speech and person. A modern historian has drawn up a list of the men of mark who made the same invigorating pilgrimage. "During the two generations which elapsed between the death of Louis XIV. and the outbreak of the Revolution, there was hardly a Frenchman of eminence who did not either visit England or learn English; while many of them did both." Among those who actually came to England and mixed in its society besides Voltaire, were Buffon, Brissot, Helvétius, Gournay, Jussieu, Lafayette, Montesquieu, Maupertuis, Morellet, Mirabeau, Roland and Madame Roland, Rousseau. We who live after Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, Scott, have begun to forget the brilliant group of the Queen Anne men. They belong to a self-complacent time, and we to a time of doubt and unsatisfied aspiration, and the two spirits are unsympathetic. Yet they were assuredly a band, from Newton and Locke down to Pope, of whom, taking them for all the qualities which they united, in science, correct judgment,

love of letters, and taste, England has as good reason to be proud as of any set of contemporary writers in her history.

Up to this moment Voltaire had been a poet, and his mind had not moved beyond the region of poetic creation. He had beaten every one once and for all on the ground of light and graceful lyric verse, "a kind of poetry," says a French critic whose word in such a matter we can hardly refuse to take, "in which Voltaire is at once with us the only master and the only writer supportable, for he is the only one whom we can read." He had produced three tragedies. His epic was completed, though undergoing ceaseless labor to the file. Two lines in his first play had served to mark him for no friend to the hierophants:

> Nos prêtres ne sont point ce qu'un vain peuple pense;
> Notre crédulité fait toute leur science.

And the words of Araspe in the same play had breathed the full spirit of the future liberator:

> Ne nous fions qu'à nous; voyons tout par nos yeux:
> Ce sont là nos trépieds, nos oracles, nos dieux.

Such expressions, however, were no more than the vague and casual word of the *esprit fort,* the friend of Chaulieu, and the rhymer of a dissolute circle, where religion only became tinged with doubt, because conduct had already become penetrated with licence. More important than such stray words was the "*Epistle of Uranie*" (1722), that truly masculine

and terse protest against the popular creed, its mean and fatuous and contradictory idea of an omnipotent God, who gave us guilty hearts so as to have the right of punishing us, and planted in us a love of pleasure so as to torment us the more effectually by appalling ills that an eternal miracle prevents from ever ending; who drowned the fathers in the deluge and then died for the children; who exacts an account of their ignorance from a hundred peoples whom he has himself plunged helplessly into this ignorance:

> Je ne reconnais point à cette indigne image
> Le dieu que je dois adorer;
> Je croirais le déshonorer
> Par une telle insulte et par un tel hommage.

Though called "The For and Against," the poet hardly tries to maintain any proportion between the two sides of the argument. The verses were addressed to a lady in a state of uncertainty as to belief, of whom there were probably more among Voltaire's friends of quality than he can have cared to cure or convert. Skepticism was at this time not much more than an interesting fashion.

The dilettante believer is indeed not a strong spirit, but the weakest, and the facts of life were by this time far too serious for Voltaire, for that truth to have missed his keen-seeing eye. It is not hard to suppose that impatient weariness of the poor life that was lived around him, had as large a share as resentment of an injustice, in driving him to a land

where men did not merely mouth idle words of making reason their oracle, their tripod, their god, but where they had actually systematized the rejection of Christianity, and had thrown themselves with grave faith on the disciplined intelligence and its lessons. When he returned, while his poetic power had ripened, he had tasted of the fruit of the tree of scientific reason, and, what was not any less important, he had become alive to the central truth of the social distinction of all art and all knowledge. In a word, he was transformed from the penman into the captain and man-at-arms. "The example of England," says Condorcet, "showed him that truth is not made to remain a secret in the hands of a few philosophers, and a limited number of men of the world, instructed, or rather indoctrinated, by the philosophers; smiling with them at the errors of which the people are the victims, but at the same time making themselves the champions of these very errors, when their rank or position gives them a real or chimerical interest in them, and quite ready to permit the proscription, or even persecution of their teachers, if they venture to say what in secret they themselves actually think. From the moment of his return, Voltaire felt himself called to destroy the prejudices of every kind, of which his country was the slave."

It is not difficult to perceive the sorts of fact which would most strike the exile's attention, though it would be rash to suppose that things struck him in

exact proportion to their real weight and the depth of their importance, or that he detected the connection subsisting among them at their roots. Perhaps the first circumstance to press its unfamiliarity upon him was the social and political consequence of the men of letters in England and the recognition given to the power of the pen. The patronage of men of genius in the reign of Anne and part of the reign of the first George had been profuse and splendid. The poet who had been thrown into prison for resenting a whipping from a nobleman's lackeys, found himself in a land where Newton and Locke were rewarded with lucrative posts in the administration of the country, where Prior and Gay acted in important embassies, and where Addison was a Secretary of State. The author of "*Œdipe*" and the "*Henriade*" had to hang ignobly about in the crowd at Versailles at the marriage of Louis XV. to gain a paltry pittance from the queen's privy purse, while in England Hughes and Rowe and Ambrose Philips and Congreve were all enjoying amply endowed sinecures. The familiar intercourse between the ministers and the brilliant literary group of that age has been often painted. At the time of Voltaire's exile it had just come to an end with the accession to supreme power of Walpole, who neither knew anything nor cared anything about the literature of his own time. But the usage was still new, and the men who had profited and given profit by it were alive, and were the central figures in the circles among

which Voltaire was introduced by Bolingbroke. Newton died in 1727, and Voltaire saw his death mourned as a public calamity, and surrounded with a pomp and circumstance in the eye of the country that could not have been surpassed if he had been, not a geometer, but a king who was the benefactor of his people. The author of "Gulliver's Travels" was still a dignitary in the state church, and there was still a large association of outward power and dignity with literary merit.

In so far as we consider literature to be one of the purely decorative arts, there can be no harm in this patronage of its most successful, that is its most pleasing, professors by the political minister; but the more closely literature approaches to being an organ of serious things, a truly spiritual power, the more danger there is likely to be in making it a path to temporal station or emolument. The practical instinct, which on some of its sides seems like a miraculously implanted substitute for scientific intelligence in English politics, has led us almost too far in preserving this important separation of the new church from the functions and rewards of the state. The misfortunes of France since the Revolution have been due to no one circumstance so markedly as to the predominance which the man of letters has acquired in that country; and this fatal predominance was first founded, though assuredly not of set design, by Voltaire.

Not less amazing than the high honor paid to

intellectual eminence was the refugee from the city of the Bastille likely to find the freedom with which public events and public personages were handled by any one who could pay a printer. The licence of this time in press and theatre has been equalled only once or twice since, and it has never been surpassed. From Bolingbroke and Swift down to the author of "The Golden Rump," every writer who chose to consider himself in opposition treated the minister with a violence and ferocity, which neither irritated nor daunted that sage head, but which would in France have crowded the lowest dungeons of the Bastille with victims of Fleury's anger and fright. Such licence was as natural in a country that had within ninety years gone through a violent civil war, a revolutionary change of government and line, and a half-suppressed dispute of succession, as it would have been astonishing in France, where the continuity of outward order had never been more than superficially ruffled, even in the most turbulent times of the factious wars of the League and the Fronde. No new idea of the relations between ruler and subject had ever penetrated into France, as it had done so deeply in the neighboring country. No serious popular issues had been so much as stated. As Voltaire wrote, in the detestable times of Charles IX. and Henry III. it was only a question whether the people should be the slaves of the Guises, while as for the last war, it deserved only hisses and contempt; for what was de Retz but a rebel without a

purpose and a stirrer of sedition without a name, and what was the parliament but a body which knew neither what it meant nor what it did not mean? The apologies of Jesuit writers for the assassination of tyrants deserve an important place in the history of the doctrine of divine right; but they were theoretical essays in casuistry for the initiated few, and certainly conveyed no general principles of popular right to the many.

Protestantism, on the other hand, loosened the conception of authority and of the respect proper for authority, to a degree which has never been realized in the most anarchic movements in France, whose anarchy has ever sprung less from a disrespect for authority as such, than from a passionate and uncompromising resolve in this or that group that the authority shall be in one set of hands and not another. Voltairism has proved itself as little capable as Catholicism of inspiring any piece that may match with Milton's "Areopagitica," the noblest defence that was ever made of the noblest of causes. We know not whether Voltaire ever thought much as to the history and foundation of that freedom of speech, which even in its abuse struck him as so wonderful a circumstance in a country that still preserved a stable and orderly society. He was probably content to admire the phenomenon of a liberty so marvellous, without searching very far for its antecedents. The mere spectacle of such free, vigorous, many-sided, and truly social and public

activity of intellect as was visible in England at this time was in itself enough to fix the gaze of one who was so intensely conscious of his own energy of intellect, and so bitterly rebellious against the system which fastened a gag between his lips.

If we would realize the impression of this scene of free speech on Voltaire's ardent spirit, we need only remember that, when in time he returned to his own country, he had to wait long and use many arts and suffer harassing persecutions, before he could publish what he had to say on Newton and Locke, and in other less important respects had to suppress much of what he had most at heart to say. "One must disguise at Paris," he wrote long after his return, "what I could not say too strongly at London"; and he vaunts his hardihood in upholding Newton against René Descartes, while he confesses that an unfortunate but necessary circumspection forced him to try to make Locke obscure. Judge the light which would come into such a mind as his, when he first saw the discussion and propagation of truth freed from these vile and demoralizing affronts. The very conception of truth was a new one, as a goddess not to be shielded behind the shades of hierophantic mystery, but rather to be sought in the free tumult and joyous strife of many voices, there vindicating her own majesty and marking her own children.

Penetrating deeper, Voltaire found not only a new idea of truth as a something rude, robust, and self-

sufficient, but also what was to him a new order of truths, the triumphs of slow-footed induction and the positive reason. France was the hotbed of systems of the physical universe. The provisional and suspensive attitude was intolerable to her impetuous genius, and the gaps which scientific investigation was unable to fill were straightway hidden behind an artificial screen of metaphysical phantasies. The Aristotelian system died harder in France than anywhere else, for so late as 1693, while Oxford and Cambridge and London were actually embracing the Newtonian principles, even the Cartesian system was forbidden to be taught by decrees of the Sorbonne and of the Council of the King. When the Cartesian physics once got a foothold, they kept it as firmly as the system which they had found so much difficulty in displacing. It is easy to believe that Voltaire's positive intelligence would hold aloof by a certain instinct from physical explanations which were unverified and incapable of being verified, and which were imbrangled with theology and metaphysics.

We can readily conceive the sensation of freshness and delight with which a mind so essentially real, and so fundamentally serious, paradoxical as this may sound in connection with the name of the greatest mocker that has ever lived, would exchange the poetized astronomy of Fontenelle, excellently constituted as Fontenelle was in a great many ways, for the sure and scientific discoveries of a Newton. Voltaire, in whatever subject, never failed to see

through rhetoric, and for rhetoric as the substitute for clear reasoning he always had an aversion as deep as it was wholesome. Nobody ever loved grace and form in style more sincerely than Voltaire, but he has shown in a great many ways that nobody ever valued grace and form more truly at their worth, compared with correctness of argument and precision and solidity of conclusion.

Locke, instead of inventing a romance of the soul, to use Voltaire's phrase, sagaciously set himself to watch the phenomena of thought, and "reduced metaphysics to being the experimental physics of the soul." Malebranche, then the reigning philosopher in France, "astonished the reason of those whom he delighted by his style. People trusted him in what they did not understand, because he began by being right in what they did understand; he seduced people by being delightful, as Descartes seduced them by being daring, while Locke was nothing more than sage." "After all," Voltaire once wrote, "we must admit that anybody who has read Locke, or rather who is his own Locke, must find the Platos mere fine talkers, and nothing more. In point of philosophy, a chapter of Locke or Clarke is, compared with the babble of antiquity, what Newton's optics are compared with those of Descartes." It is curious to observe that de Maistre, who thought more meanly of Plato than Voltaire did, and hardly less meanly than he thought of Voltaire himself, cried out that in the study of

philosophy contempt for Locke is the beginning of knowledge. Voltaire, on the other hand, is enchanted to hear that his niece reads the great English philosopher, like a good father who sheds tears of joy that his children are turning out well. Augustus published an edict *de coercendo intra fines imperio,* and like him, Locke has fixed the empire of knowledge in order to strengthen it. Locke, he says elsewhere, traced the development of the human reason, as a good anatomist explains the machinery of the human body; instead of defining all at once what we do not understand, he examines by degrees what we want to understand; he sometimes has the courage to speak positively, but sometimes also he has the courage to doubt. This is a perfectly appreciative account. Locke perceived the hopelessness of defining things as they are in themselves, and the necessity before all else of understanding the reach of the human intelligence; the impossibility of attaining knowledge absolute and transcendent, and the limitations of our thinking and knowing faculties within the bounds of an experience that must always be relative. The doubt which Voltaire praised in Locke had nothing to do with that shivering mood which receives overmuch poetic praise in our day, as the honest doubt that has more faith than half your creeds. There was no question of the sentimental juvenilities of children crying for light. It was by no means religious doubt, but philosophic;

and it affected only the possibilities of ontological knowledge, leaving the grounds of faith on the one hand, and practical conduct on the other, exactly where they were. His intense feeling for actualities would draw Voltaire irresistibly to the writer who, in his judgment, closed the gates of the dreamland of metaphysics, and banished the vaulting ambition of *a priori* certainties, which led nowhere and assured nothing. Voltaire's keen practical instinct may well have revealed to him that men were most likely to attribute to the great social problem of the improvement of mankind its right supremacy, when they had ceased to concentrate intellectual effort on the insoluble; and Locke went a long way towards showing how insoluble those questions were, on which, as it chanced, the most strenuous efforts of the intellect of Europe since the decline of theology had been concentrated.

That he should have acquired more scientific views either upon the origin of ideas, or the question whether the soul always thinks, or upon the reason why an apple falls to the ground, or why the planets remain in their orbits, was on the whole very much less important for Voltaire than a profound and very vital sentiment which was raised to supreme prominence in his mind, by the spectacle of these vast continents of knowledge newly discovered by the adventurous yet sure explorers of English thought. This sentiment was a noble faith, none the less firm because it was so passionate, in the

ability of the relative and practical understanding to reach truth; a deep-rooted reverence for it, as a majestic power bearing munificent and unnumbered gifts to mankind. Hence the vivacity of the annotations which about this time (1728) Voltaire affixed to Pascal's famous "*Thoughts,*" and which were regarded at that time as the audacious carpings of a shallow poet against a profound philosopher. They were in truth the protest of a lively common sense against a strained, morbid, and often sophistical, misrepresentation of human nature and human circumstance. Voltaire shot a penetrative ray through the clouds of doubt, out of which Pascal had made an apology for mysticism.

From this there flowed that other vehement current in his soul, of energetic hatred toward the black clouds of prejudice, of mean self-love, of sinister preference of class or order, of indolence, obstinacy, wanton fancy, and all the other unhappy leanings of human nature, and vexed and fatal conjunctures of circumstance, which interpose between humanity and the beneficent sunbeams of its own intelligence, that central light of the universe. Hence, again, by a sufficiently visible chain of thought, his marked disesteem for far-sounding names of brutal conquerors, and his cold regard for those outward and material circumstances in the state of nations, which strike the sense, but do not touch the inward reason. "Not long ago," he writes once, "a distinguished company were discussing the

trite and frivolous question, who was the greatest man, Cæsar, Alexander, Tamerlane, or Cromwell. Somebody answered that it was undoubtedly Isaac Newton. This person was right; for if true greatness consists in having received from heaven a powerful understanding and in using it to enlighten oneself and all others, then such an one as Newton, who is hardly to be met with once in ten centuries, is in truth the great man. . . . It is to him who masters our minds by the force of truth, not to those who enslave men by violence; it is to him who understands the universe, not to those who disfigure it, that we owe our reverence." This may seem trite to us, as the question which suggested it seemed to Voltaire, but we need only reflect, first, how new this was, even as an idea, in the France which Voltaire had quitted, and, second, how in spite of the nominal acceptance of the idea, in the England of our own time there is, with an immense majority not only of the general vulgar but of the special vulgar who presume to teach in press and pulpit, no name of slight at once so disdainful and so sure of transfixing as the name of thinker.

The discovery of the New World did not fire the imagination and stir the thought of Europe more intensely than the vision of these new worlds of knowledge kindled the ardor of the receptive spirit which had just come into contact with them. But besides the speculative aspects of what he saw in England, Voltaire was deeply penetrated by the

social differences between a country that had been effectively, if only partially, transformed from feudalism, and his own, where feudalism had only been transformed into a system more repressive than itself, and more unfit to conduct a nation to the free and industrious developments of new civilization. It is a remarkable thing that, though Voltaire's habitual companions or patrons had belonged to the privileged class, he had been sufficiently struck by the evils incident to the privileged system to notice the absence of such evils in England, and to make a clear attempt, though an insufficient one, to understand the secret of the English immunity from them. One of the worst curses of France was the *taille* or capitation-tax, and the way in which it was levied and assessed. In England, Voltaire noticed, the peasant has not his feet bruised in wooden shoes, he eats white bread, is decently clad, is not terrified to increase the number of his stock, or to roof his dwelling with tiles, lest his tax should be raised next year. Again, he placed his finger on one of the circumstances that did most to spoil the growth of a compact and well-knit society in France, when he pointed to the large number of farmers in England with five or six hundred pounds sterling a year, who do not think it beneath them to cultivate the earth which has made them rich, and on which they live in active freedom. De Tocqueville, the profoundest modern investigator of the conditions of French society in the eighteenth century, has indi-

cated the eagerness of every man who got a little capital to quit the country and buy a place in a town, as doing more harm to the progress of the agriculture and commerce of France than even the *taille* itself and the trade corporations.

Voltaire perceived the astonishing fact that in this country a man because he is a noble or a priest was not exempt from paying certain taxes, and that the Commons, who regulated the taxes, though second to the Lords in rank, were above them in legislative influence. His acute sight also revealed to him the importance of the mixture of ranks and classes in common pursuits, and he records with admiration instances of the younger sons of peers of the realm following trade. "Whoever arrives in Paris from the depths of a remote province with money to spend and a name in *ac* or *ille,* can talk about 'a man like me, a man of my quality,' and hold a merchant in sovereign contempt. The merchant again so constantly hears his business spoken of with disdain that he is fool enough to blush for it; yet I am not sure which is the more useful to a state, a thickly-bepowdered lord who knows exactly what time the king rises and what time he goes to bed, and gives himself mighty airs of greatness while he plays the part of a slave in a minister's anteroom; or the merchant who enriches his country, gives orders from his counting-house at Surat or Cairo, and contributes to the happiness of the globe." It is easy to conceive the fury which these contrasts

drawn from English observation would excite among the personages in France who happened to get the worst side in them, and there was assuredly nothing surprising in the decree of the parliament of Paris (1734), which condemned the "*Letters on the English*" to be publicly burned, as scandalous and contrary alike to good manners and the respect due to principalities and powers.

The English reader of the "*Letters*" is naturally struck by the absence of any adequate account of our political liberties and free constitutional forms. There is a good chapter on Bacon, one on inoculation, and several on the Quakers, but on the civil constitution hardly a word of large appreciativeness. Not only this, but there is no sign that Voltaire either set any due or special value on the popular forms of the Hanoverian time, or clearly understood that the liberty, which was so amazing and so precious to him in the region of speculative and literary activity, was the direct fruit of that general spirit of freedom, which is naturally engendered in a people accustomed to take an active part in the conduct of its own affairs. Liberty in spirituals was adorable to him, but for liberty in temporals he never seems to have had more than a very distant and verbal kind of respect; just because, with all his unmatched keenness of sight, he failed to discover that the English sturdiness in the matter of civil rights was the very root and cause, not only of that material prosperity which struck him

so much, and of the slightness and movableness of the line which divided the aristocracy from the commercial classes, but also of the fact that a Newton and a Locke were inwardly emboldened to give free play to their intelligence without fear of being punished for their conclusions, and of the only less important fact that whatever conclusions speculative genius might establish would be given to the world without interposition from any court or university or official tribunal. Voltaire undoubtedly admired the English for their parliament, because the material and superficial advantages that delighted him were evidently due to the system, which happened to be parliamentary. What we miss is any consciousness that these advantages would not have been what they are, if they had been conferred by an absolute sovereign; any recognition that political activity throughout a nation works in a thousand indirect but most potent ways, and is not more to be prized for this, than for its direct and most palpable consequences. In one place, indeed, he mentions that the honor paid to men of letters is due to the form of government, but his language betrays a wholly inadequate and incorrect notion of the true operation of the form of government. "There are in London," he says, "about eight hundred people with the right of speaking in public and maintaining the interests of the nation. Some five or six thousand pretend to the same honor in their turn. All the rest set themselves up to judge these, and

everybody can print what he thinks. So all the nation is bound to instruct itself. All talk is about the governments of Athens and Rome, and it becomes necessary to read the authors who have discussed them. That naturally leads to love of polite learning." This is to confound a very trivial accident of popular governments with their essence. If culture thrives under them — a very doubtful position — it is not because voters wish to understand the historical allusions of candidates, but because the general stir and life of public activity tends to commove the whole system. Political freedom does not produce men of genius, but its atmosphere is more favorable than any other to their making the best of their genius in the service of mankind.

Voltaire, in this as in too much besides, was content with a keen and rapid glance at the surface. The reader may remember his story of meeting a boatman one day on the Thames, who seeing that he was a Frenchman, with a too characteristic kind of courtesy, took the opportunity of bawling out, with the added emphasis of a round oath, that he would rather be a boatman on the Thames than an archbishop in France. The next day Voltaire saw his man in prison with irons on and praying an alms from the passers-by, and so asked him whether he still thought as scurvily of an archbishop in France. "Ah, sir," cried the man, "what an abominable government! I have been carried off by force to go and serve in one of the king's ships in Norway.

They take me from my wife and my children, and lay me up in prison with irons on my legs until the time for going on board, for fear I should run away." A countryman of Voltaire's confessed that he felt a splenetic joy that a people who were constantly taunting the French with their servitude were in sooth just as much slaves themselves; "but for my own part," says Voltaire, "I felt a humaner sentiment, I was afflicted at there being no liberty on the earth."

This is well enough as a comment on the abomination of impressment; yet we feel that there is behind it, and not here only but generally in Voltaire, a sort of confusion between two very distinct conceptions, that both in his day and ever since have been equally designated by the common name of civil liberty. The first of these ideas is a mere privative, undoubtedly of sovereign importance, but still a privative, and implies absence, more or less complete, of arbitrary control from without, of interference with individual action by authority, of any pretension on the part of any organized body to hinder any member of the society from doing or abstaining from doing what may seem right in his own eyes, provided he pays a corresponding respect to the freedom of his fellows. Freedom in this sense Voltaire fully understood, and valued as profoundly as it deserves to be valued. Political liberty, however, has not only a meaning of abstention, but a meaning of participation. If in one sense

it is a sheer negative, and a doctrine of rights, in another sense it is thoroughly positive, and a gospel of duties. The liberty which has really made England what it so delighted and stimulated and inflamed Voltaire to find her, has been quite as much of the second kind as of the first; that liberty which consists in a national habit of independent and watchful interest in the transaction of the national affairs by the persons most concerned in them; in a general consciousness of the duty of having some opinion on the business of the state; in a recognition on the part of the government that the balance of this opinion is necessary as a sanction to any policy, to which the effective force of the state is applied. It is true that this public participation in public concerns has sometimes been very dark and blind, as it has often been in the highest degree enlightened, but for good or for evil it has been the root of the matter.

It may at first sight be astonishing to find that, while Voltaire was impressed only in a vague and general way with the free variety of theological opinion which Protestantism had secured for England, the sect which made a sort of mark on his mind was that which conceived the idea that Christianity has after all something to do with the type and example of Christ. We know how laughable and monstrous the Quaker scheme has appeared to people who have been steeped from their youth upwards in elaborate systems of abstruse meta-

physical dogma, mystic ceremonies, hierarchic ordering, and profuse condemnation of rival creeds. Voltaire's imagination was struck by a sect who professed to regard the religion of Christ as a simple and austere discipline of life, who repudiated ritual, and held war for the worst of anti-Christian practices. The forms and doctrines of the established church of the country he would be likely to take merely for so much of the common form of the national institutions. He would simply regard it as the English way of narrowing the mind and consolidating the social order. Gibbon's famous sentence was not yet written, which described all religions as equally true in the eyes of the people, equally false in the eyes of the philosopher, and equally useful in the eyes of the magistrate. But the idea was the idea of the century, and Voltaire would justly look upon the Anglican profession as a temporarily useful and statesmanlike settlement. He praised its clergy for the superior regularity of their manners. "That indefinable being, who is neither ecclesiastic nor secular, in a word, who is called *abbé*, is an unknown species in England; the clergy here are all prigs, and nearly all pedants. When they learn that in France young men notorious for their debauchery, and raised to preferment by the intrigues of women, pursue their amours publicly, amuse themselves by the composition of gallant verses, give every day prolonged and luxurious suppers, and rise from them to implore the enlighten-

ment of the holy spirit, boldly calling themselves the successors of the apostles — why, then our English thank God that they are Protestants."

If, however, in the face of a young and lively French graduate, bawling theology in the schools in the morning and in the evening singing tender songs with the ladies, an Anglican divine is a very Cato, this Cato is a downright gallant before a Scotch Presbyterian, who assumes a grave step and a sour mien, preaches from the nose, and gives the name of harlot of Babylon to all churches in which some of the ecclesiastics are so fortunate as to receive an income of fifty thousand livres a year. However, each man takes whatever road to heaven he pleases. If there were one religion in England, they would have to fear its despotism; if there were only two, they would cut one another's throats; but there are thirty; so they live peaceably and happily together.

In the Quakers Voltaire saw something quite different from the purely political pretensions and internecine quarrels of doctrine of the ordinary worldly sects. It is impossible to say how much of the kindliness with which he speaks of them is due to real admiration of their simple, dignified, and pacific life, and how much to a mischievous desire to make their praise a handle for the dispraise of overweening competitors. On the whole there is a sincerity and heartiness of interest in his long account of this sect, which persuades one that he was moved by a genuine sympathy with a religion

that could enjoin the humane and peaceful and spiritual precepts of Christ, while putting away baptism, ceremonial communion, and hierophantic orders. The nobility of the social theories of the Society of Friends would naturally stir Voltaire even more deeply than their abstention from practices that were in his eyes degrading superstitions. He felt that the repugnance to lower the majesty of their deity, by taking his name upon their lips as solemn ratification of their words, had the effect of elevating the dignity of man, by making his bare word fully credible without this solemn ratification. Their refusal to comply with the deferential usages of social intercourse, though nominally based on the sinfulness of signs of homage to any mere mortal, insinuated a consiousness of equality and self-respect in that mere mortal who was careful to make no bows and to keep his hat on in every presence. Above all, Voltaire, who was nowhere more veritably modern or better entitled to our veneration than by reason of his steadfast hatred of war, revered a sect so far removed from the brutality of the military régime as to hold peace for a first principle of the Christian faith and religious practice. "The reason why we do not go to war," his Quaker says, "is not that we are afraid of death, but because we are not wolves, nor tigers, nor dogs, but Christian men. Our God, who has bidden us love our enemies and suffer evil without complaint, assuredly has no mind that we should cross the sea to go and cut the

throats of our brothers, because murderers in red clothes and hats two feet high enlist citizens, making a noise with two little sticks on an ass's skin tightly stretched. And when, after victories won, all London blazes with illuminations, the sky is aflame with rockets, and the air resounds with the din of bells, organs, cannon, we mourn in silence over the slaughter that causes all the public joy."

Voltaire, let us add, was no dilettante traveller constructing views and deducing theories of national life out of his own uninstructed consciousness. No German could have worked more diligently at the facts, and we may say here, once for all, that if it is often necessary to condemn him for superficiality, this lack of depth seldom at any time proceeds from want of painstaking. His unrivalled brilliance of expression blinds us to the extreme and conscientious industry that provided matter. The most illustrious exile that our free land has received from France in our own times (Hugo), and assuredly far more of a giant in the order of imagination than Voltaire, never had intellectual curiosity enough to learn the language of the country that had given him twenty years of shelter. Voltaire, in the few months of his exile here acquired such an astonishing mastery over English as to be able to read and relish an esoteric book like "Hudibras," and to compass the enormously difficult feat of rendering portions of it into good French verse. He composed an

essay on epic poetry in the English tongue, and he wrote one act of "Brutus" in English.

He read Shakespeare, and made an elaborate study of his method. He declares that Milton does as much honor to England as the great Newton, and he took especial pains not only to master and appreciate the secret of Milton's poetic power, but even to ascertain the minutest circumstances of his life. He studied Dryden, "an author who would have a glory without blemish, if he had only written the tenth part of his works." He found Addison the first Englishman who had written a reasonable tragedy, and Addison's character of Cato one of the finest creations of any stage. Wycherley, Vanbrugh, and Congreve he esteemed more highly than most of their countrymen do now. An act of a play of Lillo's was the base of the fourth act of "*Mahomet.*" Rochester, Waller, Prior, and Pope, he read carefully and admired as heartily as they deserved. Long after he had left England behind, he places Pope and Addison on a level for variety of genius with Machiavelli, Leibnitz, and Fontenelle; and Pope he evidently for a long while kept habitually by his elbow. Swift he placed before Rabelais, calling him Rabelais in his senses, and, as usual, giving good reasons for his preference; for Swift, he says justly, has not the gayety of Rabelais, but he has all the finesse, the sense, the variety, the fine taste, in which the priest of Meudon was wanting. In philosophy, besides Locke, there is evidence that he read some-

thing of Hobbes, and something of Berkeley, and something of Cudworth. Always, however, "harassed, wearied, ashamed of having sought so many truths and found so many chimeras, I returned to Locke; like a prodigal son returning to his father, I threw myself into the arms of that modest man, who never pretends to know what he does not know, who in truth has no enormous possessions, but whose substance is well assured."

Nor did Voltaire limit himself to the study of science, philosophy, and poetry. He plunged into the field of theology, and mastered that famous deistical controversy, of which the seed had been sown in the first half of the seventeenth century by Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the correspondent of Descartes and the earliest of the English metaphysical thinkers. Lord Herbert's object was to disengage from revelation both our conceptions of the one supreme power, and the sanctions of good and bad conduct. Toland, whom we know also that Voltaire read, aimed at disengaging Christianity from mystery, and discrediting the canon of the New Testament. In 1724 Collins published his "Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion," of which we are told that few books ever made a greater noise than this did at its first publication. The press teemed with vindications, replies, and rejoinders to Collins' arguments during the whole of Voltaire's residence in England. His position was one which no modern free-

thinker would dream of making a central point of attack, and which hardly any modern apologist would take the pains to reply to. He maintained that Jesus Christ and the apostles trusted to the prophecies of the Old Testament for their credentials, and then he showed, or tried to show, in various ways, that these prophecies would not bear the weight which was thus laid upon them. We may be sure that Voltaire's alert curiosity would interest him profoundly in the lively polemical ferment which this notable contention of Collins' stirred up.

Woolston's discourses, written to prove that the miracles of the New Testament are as mythical and allegorical as the prophecies of the Old Testament, appeared at the same time, and had an enormous sale. Voltaire was much struck by this writer's coarse and hardy way of dealing with the miraculous legends, and the article on "Miracles" in the "Philosophical Dictionary" shows how carefully he had read Woolston's book. We find references to Shaftesbury and Chubb in Voltaire's letters and elsewhere, though they are not the references of an admirer, and Bolingbroke was one of the most influential and intimate of his friends. It is not too much to say that Bolingbroke was the direct progenitor of Voltaire's opinions in religion, and that nearly every one of the positive articles in Voltaire's rather moderately sized creed was held and inculcated by that brilliant and disordered genius. He did not always accept Bolingbroke's optimism, but

even as late in the century as 1767 Voltaire thought it worth while to borrow his name for a volume of compendious attack on the popular religion. Bolingbroke's tone was peculiarly light and peculiarly well-bred. His infidelity was strictly infidelity for the upper classes; ingenious, full of literature, and elegantly supercilious. He made no pretence to theological criticism in any sense that can be gravely admitted, but looked at the claims of revelation with the eye of a polished man of the world, and met its arguments with those general considerations of airy probability which go so far with men who insist on having plausible opinions on all subjects, while they will not take pains to work to the bottom of any.

Villemain's observation, that there is not one of Voltaire's writings that does not bear the mark of his sojourn in England, is specially true of what he wrote against theology. It was the English onslaught which sowed in him the seed of the idea, and eventually supplied him with the argumentative instruments, of a systematic and reasoned attack upon that mass of doctrinal superstition and social abuse, which it had hitherto been the fashion for even the strongest spirits in his own country to do no more than touch with a cool sneer or a flippant insinuation, directed to the private ear of a sympathizer. "Who, born within the last forty years," cried Burke, "has read one word of Collins, and Toland, and Chubb, and Morgan, and that whole race who called themselves Freethinkers? Who

now reads Bolingbroke? Who ever read him through?" This was very well, but hundreds of thousands of persons born within those last forty years had read Voltaire, and Voltaire had drawn from the armory of these dead and unread Freethinkers the weapons which he made sharp with the mockery of his own spirit. He stood on the platform which they had constructed to stretch forth his hand against the shrine and the image before which so many credulous generations had bowed down. It was in this most transformed shape among others that at length, late and changed, but directly of descent, the free and protesting genius of the Reformation made its decisive entry into France.

It is easy to cite proofs of the repudiation by Protestant bodies of the Protestant principle, to multiply instances of the narrow rigidity of their dogma, and the intolerance of their discipline. This method supplies an excellent answer as against Protestants who tax Catholics with the crime of persecution, or the crime of opposing intellectual independence. It cannot, however, touch the fact that Protestantism was indirectly the means of creating and dispersing an atmosphere of rationalism, in which there speedily sprang up philosophical, theological, and political influences, all of them entirely antagonistic to the old order of thought and institution. The whole intellectual temperature underwent a permanent change, that was silently mortal to the most flourishing tenets of all sorts. It is futile to ask for a pre-

cise logical chain of relations between the beginning of a movement and its end; and there is no more direct and logical connection between the right of private judgment and an experiential doctrine of psychology than there is between experiential psychology and deism. Nobody now thinks that the effect is homogeneous with its cause, or that there is any objective resemblance between a blade of wheat and the moisture and warmth which fill and expand it. All we can see is that the proclamation of the rights of free judgment would tend to substitute reason for authority and evidence for tradition, as the arbiters of opinion; and that the political expression of this change in the civil wars of the middle of the seventeenth century would naturally deepen the influence of the new principle, and produce the Lockeian rationalism of the end of that century, which almost instantaneously extended from the region of metaphysics into the region of theology.

The historian of every kind of opinion, and the student of the great chiefs of intellectual movements, habitually do violence to actual circumstances, by imparting too systematic a connection to the various parts of belief, and by assuming an unreal degree of conscious logical continuity among the notions of individual thinkers. Critics fill in the frame with a completeness and exactitude that had no counterpart in the man's own judgments, and they identify him with a multitude of deductions from his premises,

which may be fairly drawn, but which never at all entered into his mind, and formed no part of his character. The philosophy of the majority of men is nothing more shaped and incorporate than a little group of potential and partially incoherent tendencies. To stiffen these into a system of definite formulas is the most deceptive, as it is the most common of critical processes. A few persons, with an exceptional turn for philosophy, consciously embody their metaphysical principles with a certain detail in all the rest of their thinking. With most people, however, even people of superior capacity, the relation between their ground-system, such as a critic might supply them with, and their manifestations of intellectual activity is of an extremely indirect and general kind.

Hence the untrustworthiness of those critical schemata, so attractive for their compact order, which first make Voltaire a Lockeian sensationalist, and then trace his deism to his sensationalism. We have already seen that he was a deist before he came to England, just as Lord Herbert of Cherbury was a deist, who wrote before Locke was born. It was not the metaphysical revolution of Locke which led to deism, but the sort of way in which he thought about metaphysics, a way which was immediately applied to theology by other people, whether assailants or defenders of the current opinions. Locke's was "common-sense thinking," and the fashion spread. The air was thick with common-sense ob-

jections to Christianity, as it was with common-sense ideas as to the way in which we come to have ideas. There was no temperament to which such an atmosphere could be so congenial as Voltaire's, of whom we cannot too often repeat, considering the vulgar reputation he has for violence and excess, that he was in thought the very genius of good sense, whether or not we fully admit M. Cousin's qualification of it as superficial good sense. It has been said that he always speaks of Descartes, Leibnitz, and Spinoza like a man to whom nature has refused the metaphysical sense. At any rate he could never agree with them, and he never tried to find truth by the roads which they had made. It is true, however, that he shows no sign of special fitness for metaphysics, any more than he did for physical science. The metaphysics of Locke lay undeveloped in his mind, just as the theory of evolution lies in so many minds at the present time. There is a faint informal reference of other theories to this central and half-seen standard. When metaphysical subjects came before him, he felt that he had this for a sheet-anchor, and he did not greatly care to keep proving it again and again by continued criticism or examination. The upshot of his acquaintance with Locke was a systematic adherence to common-sense modes of thinking; and he always betrayed the faults and shortcomings to which such modes inevitably lead, when they are brought, to the exclusion of complementary ideas, to the practical subjects that com-

prehend more than prudence, self-interest, and sobriety. The subject that does beyond any other comprehend more than these elements is religion, and the substantial vices of Voltaire's objections to religion first arose from his familiarity with the English form of deism, and his instinctive feeling for its method.

The deism of Leibnitz was a positive belief, and made the existence of a supreme power an actual and living object of conviction. The mark of this belief has remained on German speculation throughout its course, down to our own day. English deism, on the contrary, was only a particular way of repudiating Christianity. There was as little of God in it as could well be. Its theory was that God had given each man the light of reason in his own breast; that by this reason every scheme of belief must be tried, and accepted or rejected; and that the Christian scheme being so tried was in various ways found wanting. The formula of some book of the eighteenth century, that God created nature and nature created the world, must be allowed to have reduced theistic conception to something like the shadow of smoke. The English eighteenth-century formula was, theistically, nearly as void. The Being who set the reason of each individual on a kind of judicial bench within the forum of his own conscience, and left him and it together to settle belief and conduct between them, was a tolerably remote and unreal sort of personage. His spiritual force,

according to such a doctrine, became very much as if it had no existence.

It was not to be expected that a sovereign dwelling in such amazingly remote lands as this would continue long with undisputed authority, when all the negative forces of the time had reached their full momentum. In England the reaction against this strange absentee government of the universe took the form which might have been anticipated from the deep hold that Protestantism had won, and the spirituality which had been engendered by Protestant reference to the relations between the individual conscience and the mystic operations of faith. Deism became a reality with a God in it in the great Evangelical revival, terrible and inevitable, which has so deeply colored religious feeling and warped intellectual growth in England ever since. In France, thought took a very different and much simpler turn. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that it took no turn at all, but carried the godless deism of the English school to its fair conclusion, and dismissed a deity who only reigned and did not govern. The whole movement had a single origin. There is not one of the arguments of the French philosophers in the eighteenth century, says a very competent authority, which cannot be found in the English school of the beginning of the century. Voltaire, who carried the English way of thinking about the supernatural power into France, lived to see a band of trenchant and energetic disciples develop

principles which he had planted, into a system of dogmatic atheism. The time came when he was spoken of contemptuously as retrograde and superstitious: "*Voltaire est bigot, il est déiste.*"

CHAPTER III.

TEMPERAMENT, LIFE, AND LITERARY GENIUS.

On the whole, the critic's task is perhaps less to classify a type of character as good or bad, as worthy of so much praise or so much censure, than to mark the material out of which a man has his life to make, and the kind of use and form to which he puts his material. To begin with, the bald division of men into sheep and goats is in one sense so easy as not to be worth performing, and in another sense it is so hard as only to be possible for some being with supernatural insight. And even were the qualities employed in the task of a rarer kind than they are, the utility of the performance is always extremely slight, compared with that other kind of criticism which dwells less on the final balance of good or evil than on the first innate conditions of temperament, the fixed limitations of opportunity, and the complex interplay of the two with that character, which is first their creature and then their master. It is less the concern of criticism to pronounce its man absolutely rich or absolutely poor

than to count up his talents and the usury of his own which he added to them. Assuredly there ought to be little condonation of the foibles, and none at all of the moral obliquities, of the dead, because this would mean the demoralization of the living. But it is seriously to overrate the power of bald words and written opinion, to suppose that a critic's censure of conduct which a thousand other agents, from the child's hornbook up to the obvious and pressing dictates of social convenience, are daily and hourly prescribing, can be other than a work of supererogation, which fixes the mind on platitudes, instead of leading it on in search of special and distinctive traits.

It would be easy to pour overflowing vials of condemnation on many sides of Voltaire's character and career. No man possessed of so much good sense ever fell so constantly into the kinds of error against which good sense particularly warns men. There is no more wearisome or pitiful leaf in the biographies of the great, than the tale of Voltaire's quarrels with ignoble creatures; with a wrecked soul, like J. B. Rousseau (whom the reader will not confound with Jean Jacques); with a thievish bookseller, like Jore; with a calumnious journalist, like Desfontaines; with a rapacious knave like Hirschel; and all the other tormentors in the Voltairean history, whose names recall vulgar, dishonest, and indignant pertinacity on the one side, and wasteful, undignified fury on the other. That lesson in the art

of life which concerns a man's dealings with those who have shown conspicuous moral inferiority, was never mastered by Voltaire. Instead of the silence, composure, and austere oblivion, which it is of the essence of strength to oppose to unworthy natures, he habitually confronted the dusty creeping things that beset his march, as if they stood valiant and erect; and the more unworthy they were, the more vehement and strenuous and shrill was his contention with them. The ignominy of such strife is clear. One thing only may perhaps be said. His intense susceptibility to vulgar calumny flowed from the same quality in his nature which made unbearable to him the presence of superstition and injustice, those mightier calumnies on humanity. The irritated protests against the small foes of his person were as the dregs of potent wine, and were the lower part of that passionate sensibility which made him the assailant of the giant oppressors of the human mind. This reflection does not make any less tedious to us the damnable iteration of petty quarrel and fretting complaint which fills such a space in his correspondence and in his biographies, nor does it lessen our regret at the havoc which this fatal defect of his qualities made with his contentedness. We think of his consolation to a person as susceptible as himself: "There have always been Frérons in literature; but they say there must be caterpillars for nightingales to eat, that they may sing the better;" and we wish that our nightingale had devoured its portion with

something less of tumult. But it may do something to prevent us from giving a prominence, that is both unfair and extremely misleading, to mere shadow, as if that had been the whole substance. Alas, why after all should men, from Moses downwards, be so cheerfully ready to contemplate the hinder parts of their divinities?

The period of twenty years between Voltaire's departure from England and his departure for Berlin, although often pronounced the happiest time of his life, is very thickly set with these humiliating incidents. To us, however, they are dead, because though vivid enough to Voltaire — and it is strange how constantly it happens that the minor circumstance of life is more real and ever-present to a man than his essential and abiding work in it — they were but transitory and accidental. Just as it does little good to the understanding to spend much time over tenth-rate literature, so it is little edifying to the character to rake among the private obscurities of even first-rate men, and it is surely a good rule to keep ourselves as much as we can in contact with what is great.

The chief personal fact of this time was the connection which Voltaire formed with the Marquise du Châtelet, and which lasted from 1733 till 1749. She was to him that important and peculiar influence which, in one shape or another, some woman seems to have been to nearly every foremost man. In Voltaire's case this influence was not the rich and

tender inspiration with which women have so many a time sweetened the lives and glorified the thought of illustrious workers, nor was he bound to her by those bonds of passion which have often the effect of exalting the strength and widening the range of the whole of the nature that is susceptible to passion. Their inner relations hardly depended on anything more extraordinary or more delicate than the sentiment of a masculine friendship. Voltaire found in the divine Emily a strong and active head, a keen and generous admiration for his own genius, and an eagerness to surround him with the external conditions most favorable to that steady industry which was always a thing so near his own heart. They are two great men, one of whom wears petticoats, said Voltaire of her and of Frederick. It is impossible to tell what share vanity had in the beginning of a connection, which probably owed its long continuance more to use and habit than to any deep-rooted sentiment. Vanity was one of the most strongly marked of Voltaire's traits, and to this side of him relations with a woman of quality who adored his genius were no doubt extremely gratifying. Yet one ought to do him the justice to say that his vanity was only skin-deep. It had nothing in common with the greedy egotism which reduces the whole broad universe to a mere microcosm of pygmy self. The vanity which discloses a real flaw in character is a loud and tyrannical claim for acknowledgment of literary supremacy, and with it the mean vices of

envy, jealousy, and detraction are usually in company. Voltaire's vanity was something very different from this truculent kind of self-assertion. It had a source in his intensely sympathetic quality, and was a gay and eager asking of assurance from others that his work gave them pleasure. Let us be very careful to remember that it never stood in the way of self-knowledge — the great test of the difference between the vanity that is harmless, and the vanity that is fatuous and destructive.

It has been rather the fashion to laugh at the Marquise du Châtelet, for no better reasons perhaps than that she, being a woman, studied Newton, and had relations called tender with a man so little associated in common opinion with tenderness as Voltaire. The first reason is disgraceful, and the second is perhaps childish. Everything goes to show that Madame du Châtelet possessed a hardy originality of character, of which society is so little likely to have an excess that we can hardly ever be thankful enough for it. There is probably nothing which would lead to so rapid and marked an improvement in the world as a large increase of the number of women in it with the will and the capacity to master Newton as thoroughly as she did. And her long and sedulous affection for a man of genius of Voltaire's exceptional quality entitles her to the not too common praise of recognizing and revering intellectual greatness as it deserves. Her friendship for him was not the semi-servile and feebly intelligent

solicitude which superior men have too often the wretched weakness to seek in their female companions, but an imperial sympathy. She was unamiable, it is true, and possessed neither the delicacy which a more fastidious age requires in a woman, nor the sense of honor which we now demand in a man. These defects, however, were not genuinely personal, but lay in the manners of the time. It was not so with all her faults. To the weak and dependent she was overbearing, harsh, mean, and even cruel. A fatuous caprice would often destroy the domestic peace and pleasure of a week. But nothing was suffered to impede the labor of a day. The industry of the house was incessant.

It is said, and it was said first by one who lived with them for some time, and has left a graphic account of the interior of Cirey, that she made Voltaire's life a little hard to him. There were many occasional storms and short sullen fits even in these high regions of science and the finer tastes. Yet such stormful scenes, with great actors as with small, are perhaps more painful in description than they were in reality; and Voltaire was less discomposed by the lively impetuosity of a companion like Madame du Châtelet than he would have been by the orderly calm of a more precise and perfectly well-regulated person. A man follows the conditions of his temperament, and Voltaire's unresting animation and fire might make him feel a certain joy of life and freedom in the occasional conten-

tiousness of a slightly shrewish temper. We cannot think of him as ever shrinking, ever craving for repose, as some men do as for a very necessity of existence. "The health of your friend," wrote Madame du Châtelet to de Argental, in 1739, "is in so deplorable a state that the only hope I have left of restoring it is in the turmoil of a journey." A tolerably frequent agitation was a condition of even such health as he had, to one of Voltaire's nervous and feverish habit.

Let it be said that his restlessness never took a form which involved the sacrifice of the happiness of other people. It was never tyrannical and exigent. There are many, too many, instances of his angry impatience with persons against whom he thought he had cause of offence. There is not a single instance in which any shadow of implacableness lurked for an enemy who had repented or fallen into misfortune; and if his resentment was constantly aflame against the ignoble, it instantly expired and changed into warm-hearted pity, when the ignoble became either penitent or miserable. There are many tales of the readiness with which his anger was appeased. Any one will suffice as a type. On some occasion when Voltaire was harassed by a storm of libels, and happened to be on good terms with the police, a distributor of the libels was arrested. The father, an old man of eighty, hastened to Voltaire to pray for pardon. All Voltaire's fury instantly vanished at the first appeal; he wept with

the old man, embraced him, consoled him, and straightway ran to procure the liberation of the offender. An eye-witness related to Grimm how he happened to be present at Ferney when Voltaire received Rousseau's *"Lettres de la Montagne,"* and read the apostrophe relating to himself. His face seemed to take fire, his eyes sparkled with fury, his whole frame trembled, and he cried in terrible tones: "The miscreant! the monster! I must have him cudgelled — yes, I will have him cudgelled in his mountains at the knees of his nurse." "Pray, calm yourself," said the bystander, "for I know that Rousseau means to pay you a visit, and will very shortly be at Ferney." "Ah, only let him come," replied Voltaire. "But how will you receive him?" "Receive him . . . I will give him supper, put him in my own bed, and say, 'There is a good supper; this is the best bed in the house; do me the pleasure to accept one and the other, and to make yourself happy here.'" One does not understand the terrible man, without remembering always how much of the hot generosity of the child he kept in his nature to the last. When the very Jesuits were suppressed with circumstances of extreme harshness, he pitied even them, and took one of their number permanently into his household.

The most important part of a man's private conduct, after that which concerns his relations with women and his family, is generally that which concerns his way of dealing with money, because money

in its acquisition and its dispersion is the outward and visible sign of the absence or of the presence of so many inward and spiritual graces. As has often been said, it is the measure of some of the most important of a man's virtues, his honesty, his industry, his generosity, his self-denial, and most of the other elements in keeping the difficult balance between his care for himself and his care for other people. Voltaire perceived very early in life that to be needy was to be dependent; that the rich and poor are as hammer and anvil; that the chronicles of genius demonstrate that it is not by genius that men either make a fortune or live happy lives. He made up his mind from the beginning that the author of the French epic would not share the poverty and straitened lives of Tasso and Milton, and that he for his part would at any rate be hammer and not anvil. "I was so wearied," he wrote in 1752, "of the humiliations that dishonor letters, that to stay my disgust I resolved to make what scoundrels call a great fortune." He used to give his books away to the printers. He had a small fortune from his father; he is said to have made two thousand pounds by the English subscriptions to the "*Henriade;*" and he did not hide his talent in the ground, but resorted skilfully to all sorts of speculations in stocks, army contracts, and other authorized means of converting one livre into two while you sleep. He lent large sums of money, presumably at handsome interest, to the Duke of

Richelieu and others, and though the interest may have been handsome, the trouble of procuring it was often desperate. Yet after much experience Voltaire came to the conclusion that though he had sometimes lost money by bankers, by the devout, by the people of the Old Testament, who would have had many scruples about a larded capon, who would rather die than not be idle on the Sabbath, and not be thieving on the Sunday, yet he had lost nothing by the great except his time.

It is easy to point a sneer at a high priest of humanity jobbing in the funds. Only let us remember that Voltaire never made any pretence of being a high priest of humanity; that his transactions were substantially very like those of any banker or merchant of to-day; and that for a man who was preaching new opinions it was extremely prudent to place himself out of the necessity of pleasing booksellers or the pit of the theatre on the one hand, and on the other to supply himself with ready means of frequent flight from the ceaseless persecutions of authority. Envious scribes in his lifetime taunted him with avarice, and the evil association still clings to his memory now that he is dead. One can only say that good and high-minded men, who never shrank from withstanding him when in fault, men like Condorcet for example, heard such talk with disdain, and set it down to the disgraceful readiness of men to credit anything that relieves them from having to admire. The people who dislike prudence

in matters of money in those whose distinction is intellectual or spiritual, resemble a sentimental lover who should lose his illusions at sight of his mistress eating a hearty meal. Is their lot, then, cast in the ethereal fluid of the interstellar spaces?

At all events Voltaire had two important gifts which do not commonly belong to the avaricious; he was a generous helper alike of those who had, and those who had not, a claim upon him, and he knew how to bear serious losses with unbroken composure. Michel, the receiver-general, became bankrupt, and Voltaire lost a considerable sum of money in consequence. His fluency of invective and complaint, which was simply boundless when an obscure scribbler earned a guinea by a calumny upon him, went no farther on the occasion of this very substantial injury than a single splenetic phrase, and a harmless quatrain:

> Michel au nom de l'Éternel,
> Mit jadis le diable en déroute;
> Mais, après cette banqueroute,
> Que le diable emporte Michel!

It has been fairly asked whether a genuine miser would content himself with a stanza upon the man who had robbed him. His correspondence with the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha shows him declining to accept the thousand louis which she had sent as a fee for the composition of the *"Annales de l'Empire."*

Much has been made of the bargaining which he carried on with Frederick, as to the terms on which

he would consent to go to Berlin. But then the Prussian king was not one with whom it was wise to be too nice in such affairs. He was the thriftiest of men, and as a king is a person who lives on other people's money, such thrift was in his case the most princely of virtues. Haggling is not graceful, but it need not imply avarice in either of the parties to it. The truth is that there was in Voltaire a curious admixture of splendid generosity with virulent tenacity about pennies. The famous quarrel with the President de Brosses about the fourteen cords of firewood is a worse affair. Voltaire, who leased Tourney from him, insisted that de Brosses had made him a present of the fourteen cords. De Brosses, no doubt truly, declared that he had only ordered the wood to be delivered on Voltaire's account. On this despicable matter a long correspondence was carried on, in which Voltaire is seen at his very worst; insolent, undignified, low-minded, and even untruthful. The case happily stands alone in his biography. As a rule, he is a steady practitioner of the Aristotelian *μεγαλοπρέπεια*, or virtue of magnificent expenditure.

The truly important feature of the life which Voltaire led at Cirey was its unremitting diligence. Like a Homeric goddess, the divine Emily poured a cloud round her hero. There is a sort of moral climate in a household, an impalpable, unseizable, indefinable set of influences, which predispose the inmates to industry and self-control, or else relax

fibre and slacken purpose. At Cirey there was an almost monastic rule. Madame Grafigny says that though Voltaire felt himself bound by politeness to pay her a visit from time to time in her apartment, he usually avoided sitting down, apologetically protesting how frightful a thing is the quantity of time people waste in talking, and that waste of time is the most fatal kind of extravagance of which one can be guilty. He seems to have usually passed the whole day at his desk, or in making physical experiments in his chamber. The only occasion on which people met was at the supper at nine in the evening. Until then the privacy of the chamber alike of the hostess, who was analyzing Leibnitz or translating Newton, and of the unofficial host, who was compiling material for the *"Siècle de Louis XIV.,"* or polishing and repolishing *"Mahomet,"* or investigating the circumstances of the propagation of fire, was sacredly inviolable.

The rigor of the rule did not forbid theatrical performances, when any company, even a company of marionettes, came into the neighborhood of the desolate Champagne château. Sometimes after supper Voltaire would exhibit a magic lantern, with explanatory comments after the showman's manner, in which he would convulse his friends at the expense of his enemies. But after the evening's amusement was over, the Marquise would retire to work in her chamber until the morning, and, when morning came, a couple of hours' sleep was the only division

between the tasks of the night and the tasks of the day. Two splenetic women have left us a couple of spiteful pictures of Madame du Châtelet, but neither of her detractors could rise to any higher conception of intellectual effort than the fine turn of phrase, the ingenious image, the keen thrust of cruel satire, with which the polished idle of that day whiled away dreary and worthless years. The translator of Newton's "*Principia*" was not of this company, and she was wholly indifferent to the raillery, sarcasm and hate of women whom she justly held her inferiors. It is much the fashion to admire the women of this time, because they contrive to hide behind a veil of witty words the coldness and hollowness of lives which had neither the sweetness of the old industrious domesticity of women, nor the noble largeness of some of those in whom the Revolution kindled a pure fire of patriotism in after days. Madame du Châtelet, with all her faults, was a far loftier character than the malicious gossips who laughed at her. "Everything that occupies society was within her power, *except slander*. She was never heard to hold up anybody to laughter. When she was informed that certain people were bent on not doing her justice, she would reply that she wished to ignore it." This was surely better than a talent for barbing epigrams, and she led a worthier life at Cirey than in that Paris which Voltaire described so bitterly.

Là, tous les soirs, la troupe vagabonde,
D'un peuple oisif, appelé le beau monde,
Va promener de réduit en réduit
L'inquiétude et l'ennui qui la suit.
Là sont en foule antiques mijaurées,
Jeunes oisons et bégueules titrées,
Disant des riens d'un ton de perroquet,
Lorgnant des sots, et trichant au piquet.
Blondins y sont, beaucoup plus femmes qu'elles.
Profondément remplis de bagatelles,
D'un air hautain, d'une bruyante voix,
Chantant, dansant, minaudant à la fois.
Si par hasard quelque personne honnête,
D'un sens plus droit et d'un gout plus heureux
Des bons écrits ayant meublé sa tête,
Leur fait l'affront de penser à leurs yeux;
Tout aussitôt leur brillante cohue,
D'étonnement et de colère émue,
Bruyant essaim de frêlons envieux,
Pique et poursuit cette abeille charmante.[1]

It was not the fault of Madame du Châtelet that the life of Cirey was not the undisturbed type of Voltaire's existence during the fifteen years of their companionship. Many pages might be filled with a mere list of the movements from place to place to which Voltaire resorted, partly from reasonable fear of the grip of a jealous and watchful government, partly from eagerness to bring the hand of the government upon his enemies, and most of all from the uncontrollable restlessness of his own nature. Amsterdam, The Hague, Brussels, Berlin, the little court of Lunéville, and the great world of Paris,

[1] Epître à Mme. la Marquise du Châtelet, sur la Calomnie. *Œuvres*, xvii, 85.

too frequently withdrew him from the solitary castle at Cirey, though he never failed to declare on his return, and with perfect sincerity, that he was never so happy anywhere else. If it was true that the Marquise made her poet's life a little hard to him, it is impossible to read her correspondence without perceiving that he, too, though for no lack of sensibility and good feeling, often made life extremely hard for her. Besides their moral difference, there was a marked discrepancy in intellectual temperament, which did not fail to lead to outward manifestations. Voltaire was sometimes a little weary of Newton and exact science, while the Marquise was naturally of the rather narrow turn for arid truths which too often distinguishes clever women inadequately disciplined by contact with affairs.

Voltaire was not merely one of those "paper philosophers," whose intrusion into the fields of physical science its professional followers are justly wont to resent. He was an active experimenter, and more than one letter remains, containing instructions to his agent in Paris to forward him retorts, air-pumps, and other instruments, with the wise hint in one place, a hint by no means of a miser, "In the matter of buying things, my friend, you should always prefer the good and sound even if a little dear, to what is only middling but cheaper." His correspondence for some years proves the diligence and sincerity of his interest in science. Yet it is tolerably clear that the man who did so much to

familiarize France with the most illustrious of physicists, was himself devoid of true scientific aptitude. After long and persevering labor in this region, Voltaire consulted Clairaut on the progress he had made. The latter, with a loyal frankness which Voltaire knew how to appreciate, answered that even with the most stubborn labor he was not likely to attain to anything beyond mediocrity in science, and that he would be only throwing away time which he owed to poetry and philosophy. The advice was taken; for, as we have already said, Voltaire's self-love was never fatuous, and the independent search of physical truth was given up. There is plainly no reason to regret the pains which Voltaire took in this kind of inquiry, not because the study of the sciences extends the range of poetic study and enriches verse with fresh images, but because the number of sorts of knowledge in which a man feels at home and is intelligently cognizant of their scope and issues, even if he be wholly incompetent to assist in the progress of discovery, increases that intellectual confidence and self-respect of understanding, which so fortifies and stimulates him in his own special order of work. We cannot precisely contend that this encyclopædic quality is an indispensable condition of such self-respect in every kind of temper. It certainly was so with Voltaire. "After all, my dear friend," he wrote to Cideville, " it is right to give every possible form to our soul. It is a flame that God has intrusted to us,

we are bound to feed it with all that we find most precious. We should introduce into our existence all imaginable modes, and open every door of the soul to all sorts of knowledge and all sorts of feelings. So long as it does not all go in pell-mell, there is plenty of room for everything."

To us, who can be wise after the event, it is clear that if ever a man was called not to science, nor to poetry, nor to theology, nor to metaphysics, but to literature, the art, so hard to define, of showing the ideas of all subjects in the double light of the practical and the spiritual reason, that man was Voltaire. He has himself dwelt on the vagueness of this much-abused term, without contributing anything more satisfactory towards a better account of it than a crude hint that literature, not being a special art, may be considered a kind of larger grammar of knowledge. Although, however, it is true that literature is not a particular art, it is not the less true that there is a mental constitution particularly fitted for its successful practice. Literature is essentially an art of form, as distinguished from those exercises of intellectual energy which bring new stores of matter to the stock of acquired knowledge, and give new forces to emotion and original and definite articulation to passion. It is a misleading classification to call the work of Shakespeare and Molière, Shelley and Hugo, literary, just as it would be an equally inaccurate, though more glaring piece of classification, to count the work of Newton or Locke litera-

ture. To take another case from Voltaire, it would not be enough to describe "Bayle's Dictionary" as a literary compilation; it would not even be enough to describe it as a work of immense learning, because the distinguishing and superior mark of this book is a profound dialectic. It forms men of letters and is above them.

What is it then that literature brings to us that earns its title to high place, though far from a highest place, among the great humanizing arts? Is it not that this is the master organon for giving men the two precious qualities of breadth of interest and balance of judgment; multiplicity of sympathies and steadiness of sight? Unhappily, literature has too often been identified with the smirks and affectations of mere elegant dispersiveness, with the hollow niceties of the virtuoso, a thing of madrigals. It is not in any sense of this sort that we can think of Voltaire as specially the born minister of literature. What we mean is that while he had not the loftier endowments of the highest poetic conception, subtle speculative penetration, or triumphant scientific power, he possessed a superb combination of wide and sincere curiosity, an intelligence of vigorous and exact receptivity, a native inclination to candor and justice, and a pre-eminent mastery over a wide range in the art of expression. Literature being concerned to impose form, to diffuse the light by which common men are able to see the great host of ideas and facts that do not shine in the brightness of their

own atmosphere, it is clear what striking gifts Voltaire had in this way. He had a great deal of knowledge, and he was ever on the alert both to increase and broaden his stock, and, what was still better, to impart of it to everybody else. He did not think it beneath him to write on "Hemistichs" for the "Encyclopædia." "It is not a very brilliant task," he said, "but perhaps the article will be useful to men of letters and amateurs; one should disdain nothing, and I will do the word 'Comma,' if you choose." He was very catholic in taste, being able to love Racine without ignoring the lofty stature of Shakespeare. And he was free from the weakness which so often attends on catholicity, when it is not supported by true strength and independence of understanding; he did not shut his eyes to the shortcomings of the great. While loving Molière, he was aware of the incompleteness of his dramatic construction, as well as of the egregious farce to which that famous writer too often descends. His respect for the sublimity and pathos of Corneille did not hinder him from noting both his violence and his frigid argumentation. Does the reader remember that admirable saying of his to Vauvenargues: *"It is the part of a man like you to have preferences, but no exclusions?"* To this fine principle Voltaire was usually thoroughly true, as every great mind, if only endowed with adequate culture, must necessarily be.

Nul auteur avec lui n'a tort,
Quand il a trouvé l'art de plaire;
Il le critique sans colère,
Il l'applaudit avec transport.

Thirdly, that circumfusion of bright light which is the highest aim of speech, was easy to Voltaire, in whatever order of subject he happened to treat. His style is like a translucent stream of purest mountain water, moving with swift and animated flow under flashing sunbeams. "Voltaire," said an enemy, "is the very first man in the world at writing down what other people have thought." What was meant for a spiteful censure, was in fact a truly honorable distinction.

The secret is incommunicable. No spectrum analysis can decompose for us that enchanting ray. It is rather, after all, the piercing metallic light of electricity than a glowing beam of the sun. We can detect some of the external qualities of this striking style. We seize its dazzling simplicity, its almost primitive closeness to the letter, its sharpness and precision, above all, its admirable brevity. We see that no writer ever used so few words to produce such pregnant effects. Those whom brevity only makes thin and slight may look with despair on pages where the nimbleness of the sentence is in proportion to the firmness of the thought. We find no bastard attempts to reproduce in words deep and complex effects, which can only be adequately presented in color or in the combinations of musical

sound. Nobody has ever known better the true limitations of the material in which he worked, or the scope and possibilities of his art. Voltaire's alexandrines, his witty stories, his mock-heroic, his exposition of Newton, his histories, his dialectic, all bear the same mark, the same natural, precise, and condensed mode of expression, the same absolutely faultless knowledge of what is proper and permitted in every given kind of written work. At first there seems something paradoxical in dwelling on the brevity of an author whose works are to be counted by scores of volumes. But this is no real objection. A writer may be insufferably prolix in the limits of a single volume, and Voltaire was quite right in saying that there are four times too many words in the one volume of d'Holbach's "System of Nature." He maintains too that Rabelais might advantageously be reduced to one-eighth, and Bayle to a quarter, and there is hardly a book that is not curtailed in the perfecting hands of the divine muses. So, conversely, an author may not waste a word in a hundred volumes. Style is independent of quantity, and the world suffers so grievously from the mass of books that have been written, not because they are many, but because such a vast proportion of their pages say nothing while they purport to say so much.

No study, however, of this outward ease and swift compendiousness of speech will teach us the secret that was beneath it in Voltaire, an eye and a hand

that never erred in hitting the exact mark of appropriateness in every order of prose and verse. Perhaps no such vision for the befitting in expression has ever existed. He is the most trenchant writer in the world, yet there is not a sentence of strained emphasis or overwrought antithesis; he is the wittiest, yet there is not a line of bad buffoonery. And this intense sense of the appropriate had by nature and cultivation become so entirely a fixed condition of Voltaire's mind that it shows spontaneously and without an effort in his work. Nobody is more free from the ostentatious correctness of the literary precisian, and nobody preserves so much purity and so much dignity of language with so little formality of demeanor. It is interesting to notice the absence from his writings of that intensely elaborated kind of simplicity in which some of the best authors of a later time express the final outcome of many thoughts. The strain that society has undergone since Voltaire's day has taught men to qualify their propositions. It has forced them to follow truth slowly along paths steep and devious. New notes have been struck in human feeling, and all thought has now been touched by complexities that were then unseen. Hence, as all good writers aim at simplicity and directness, we have seen the growth of a new style, in which the rays of many side-lights are concentrated in some single phrase. That Voltaire does not use these focalizing words and turns of composition only means that to him thought was

less complex than it is to a more subjective generation. Though the literature which possesses Milton and Burke need not fear comparison with the graver masters of French speech, we have no one to place exactly by the side of Voltaire. But, then, no more has France. There are many pages of Swift which are more like one side of Voltaire than anything else that we have, and Voltaire probably drew the idea of his famous stories from the creator of Gulliver, just as Swift got the idea of the "Tale of a Tub" from Fontenelle's "History of Mero and Enegu," that is, of Rome and Geneva. Swift has correctness, invention, irony, and a trick of being effectively literal and serious in absurd situations, just as Voltaire has; but then Swift is often truculent and often brutally gross, both in thought and in phrase. Voltaire is never either brutal or truculent. Even amid the licence of the "*Pucelle*" and of his romances, he never forgets what is due to the French tongue. What always charmed him in Racine and Boileau, he tells us, was that they said what they intended to say, and that their thoughts have never cost anything to the harmony or the purity of the language. Voltaire ranged over far wider ground than the two poets ever attempted to do, and trod in many slippery places, yet he is entitled to the same praise as that which he gave to them.

Unhappily, one of the many evil effects which have alloyed the revolution that Voltaire did so much

to set in motion has been, both in his country and ours, that purity and harmony of language, in spite of the examples of the great masters who have lived since, have on the whole declined. In both countries familiarity and slang have actually asserted a place in literature on some pretence that they are real; an assumed vulgarity tries to pass for native homeliness, and, as though a giant were more impressive for having a humped back, some men of true genius seem only to make sure of fame by straining themselves into grotesques. In a word, the action against a spurious dignity of style has carried men too far, because the reaction against the dignified elements in the old order went too far. Style, after all, as one has always to remember, can never be anything but the reflex of ideas and habits of mind, and when respect for one's own personal dignity as a ruling and unique element in character gave way to sentimental love of the human race, often real, and often a pretence, old self-respecting modes of expression went out of fashion. And all this has been defended by a sort of argument that might just as appropriately have been used by Diogenes, vindicating the filthiness of his tub against a doctrine of clean linen.

To follow letters, it is important to observe, meant then, or at least after Voltaire's influence rose to its height, it meant distinctly to enter the ranks of the opposition. In our own time the profession of letters is placed with other polite avocations, and those who

follow it for the most part accept the traditional social ideas of the time, just as clergymen, lawyers, and physicians accept them. The modern man of letters corresponds to the ancient sophist, whose office it was to confirm, adorn, and propagate the current prejudice. To be a man of letters in France in the middle of the eighteenth century was to be the official enemy of the current prejudices and their sophistical defenders in the church and the parliaments. Parents heard of a son's design to go to Paris and write books, or to mix with those who wrote books, with the same dismay with which a respectable Athenian heard of a son following Socrates. The hyper-Hellenistic collegian need not accuse us of instituting a general parallel between Socrates and Voltaire. The only point on which we are insisting is that each was the leader of the assault against the sophists of his day, though their tactics and implements of war were sufficiently unlike. To the later assailant the conditions of the time made the pen the most effective instrument. The clergy had the pulpit and the confessional, and their enemies had the press.

It was during the period of his connection with Madame du Châtelet, that is in the active literary years between his return from England and his removal to Berlin, that Voltaire's dramatic talent was most productive.[1] He is usually considered to

[1] The dates of the most famous of his tragedies are these: *Œdipe*, 1718; *Brutus*, 1730; *Zaïre*, 1732; *Mort de César*,

hold the same place relatively to Corneille and Racine that Euripides held relatively to Æschylus and Sophocles. It is not easy to see what is the exact point of analogy in which the critics agree beyond the corresponding place in the order of chronological succession, and such parallels are not really very full of instruction. If we are to draw any parallel at all, it must be between the Greek and Racine. The differences between Euripides and his predecessors are not those between Voltaire and his predecessors. There may be one common peculiarity. Each made the drama an instrument for the expression not merely of passion, but of speculative and philosophical matter, and this in each case of a skeptical kind in reference to the accepted traditions of the time. But apart from the vast superiority of the Greek in depth and passion and dramatic invention, in Voltaire this philosophizing is very much more indirect, insinuatory, and furtive, than in the marked sententiousness of Euripides. There are critics, indeed, who insist that all Voltaire's poetic work is a series of pamphlets in disguise, and that he ought to be classified, in that jargon which makes an uncouth compound pass muster for a new critical nicety, as a tendency-poet. To accept this would simply be to leave out of account the very best of Voltaire's plays, including *"Mérope," Sémiramis," "Tancrède,"* in which the

---

1735; *Alzire*, 1736; *Mahomet*, 1731; *Mérope*, 1743; *Sémiramis*, 1748; *Tancrède*, 1760.

most ingenious of men and critics would be at a loss to find any tendency of the pamphleteering kind. Voltaire's ever-present sense of congruity prevented him from putting the harangue of the pulpit or the discourse of the academic doctor upon the tragic stage. If the clergy found in "*Mahomet*," for instance, a covert attack on their own religion, it was much more because the poet was suspected of unbelief, than because the poem contained infidel doctrine. Indeed, nothing shows so clearly as the strange affright at this and some other pieces of Voltaire's, that the purport and effect of poetry must depend nearly as much upon the mind of the audience as upon the lines themselves. His plays may be said to have led to skepticism, only because there was skeptical predisposition in the mind which his public brought to them; and under other circumstances, if for instance it had been produced in the time of Louis XIV., the exposure of Mahomet would have been counted a glorification of the rival creed. Indeed, Pope Benedict XIV. did by and by accept Voltaire's dedication of the play, whether in good faith or not we cannot tell, on the express ground that it was an indirect homage to Christianity. Men with a sense of artistic propriety far inferior to Voltaire's are yet fully alive to the monstrosity of disguising a pamphleteer's polemic in the form of a pretended drama.

In choice of subject, Voltaire, we may believe, was secretly guided by his wish to relax the oppressive

hold of religious prejudice. Religion, we cannot too fully realize, was the absorbing burden of the time. There was no sort of knowledge, from geometry onwards, on which it did not weigh. Whatever work Voltaire set himself to, he was confronted in it by the Infamous. Thus in accordance with the narrow theory of his time, he held Mahomet to be a deliberate and conscious impostor, and in presenting the founder of one great religion in this odious shape, he was doubtless suggesting that the same account might be true of the founder of another. But the suggestion was entirely outside of the play itself, and we who have fully settled these questions for ourselves, may read *"Mahomet"* without suspecting the shade of a reference from Mecca to Jerusalem, though hardly without contemning the feebleness of view which could see nothing but sensuality, ambition, and crime in the career of the fierce eastern reformer. The sentiments of exalted deism which are put into the mouth of the noble Zopire were perhaps meant to teach people that the greatest devotion of character may go with the most unflinching rejection of a pretended revelation from the gods. This again is a gloss from without, and by no means involves Voltaire in the offence of art with a moral purpose.

"Zaïre" was the first play in which French characters appeared upon the tragic stage. The heroine, the daughter of Lusignan, has been brought up, unconscious of her descent, in the Mahometan faith

and usage. Consider the philosophy of these lines which are given to her:

La coutume, la loi plia mes premiers ans
À la religion des heureux musulmans.
Je le vois trop; les soins qu'on prend de notre enfance
Forment nos sentimens, nos mœurs, notre croyance.
J'eusse été près du Gange esclave des faux dieux,
Chrétienne dans Paris, musulmane en ces lieux.
L'instruction fait tout; et la main de nos pères
Grave en nos faibles cœurs ces premiers caractères,
Que l'exemple et le temps nous viennent retracer,
Et que peut-être en nous Dieu seul peut effacer.[1]

This of course implies the doctrine of Pope's "Universal Prayer," and contains an idea that was always the favorite weapon for smiting the over-confident votaries of a single supernatural revelation. Locke had asked whether "the current opinions and licenced guides of every country are sufficient evidence and security to every man to venture his great concernments on? Or, can these be the certain and infallible oracle and standards of truth which teach one thing in Christendom, and another in Turkey? Or shall a poor countryman be eternally happy for having the chance to be born in Italy? Or a day-laborer be unavoidably lost because he had the ill-luck to be born in England?" This was exactly the kind of reasoning to which Zaïre's lines pointed; and Voltaire was never weary of arguing that the divine lay outside of the multitudinous variety of creeds that were never more than local accidents. Neither, however, in "*Zaïre*" nor anywhere else is the law of

[1] *Zaïre*, act i, sc. 1.

perfect dramatic fitness violated for the sake of a lesson in heterodoxy. With Voltaire tragedy is, as all art ought to be, a manner of disinterested presentation. This is not the noblest energy of the human intelligence, but it is truly art, and Voltaire did not forget it.

It would be entirely unprofitable to enter into any comparison of the relative merits of Voltaire's tragedies and those either of the modern romantic school in his own country or of the master dramatists of our own. Every form of composition must be judged in its own order, and the order in which Voltaire chose to work was the French classic, with its appointed conditions and fixed laws, its three unities, its stately alexandrines, and all the other essentials of that special dramatic form. Here is one of the many points at which we feel that Voltaire is trying to prolong in literature, if not in thought, the impressive tradition of the grand age. At the same moment, strangely enough, he was giving that stir to the opinion of his time which was the prime agent in definitely breaking the hold of that tradition. It is no infidelity to the glorious and incomparable genius of Shakespeare, nor does it involve any blindness to the fine creation, fresh fancy, and noble thought and imagery of our less superb men, yet to admit that there is in these limits of construction a concentration and regularity, and in these too contemned alexandrines a just and swelling cadence, that confer a high degree of pleasure of the

highest kind, and that demand intellectual quality only less rare than that other priceless and unattainable quality of having the lips touched with divine fire. It is said, however, that such quality does not produce acting plays, but only dramatic poems: this is really laughable if we remember first, that the finest actors in the world have been trained in the recitation of these alexandrines, and second, that as large and as delighted an audience used until within some twenty years ago to crowd to a tragedy of Corneille or Racine, seen repeatedly before, as to a brand-new vaudeville, never to be seen again.

"We insist," said Voltaire, "that the rhyme shall cost nothing to the ideas; that it shall neither be trivial nor too far-fetched; we exact rigorously in a verse the same purity, the same precision, as in prose. We do not permit the smallest licence; we require an author to carry without a break all these chains, and yet that he should appear ever free." He admitted that sometimes they failed in reaching the tragic, through excessive fear of passing its limits. He does justice to the singular merits of our stage in the way of action. Shakespeare, he says, "had a genius full of force and fertility, of all that is natural and all that is sublime." It is even the merit of Shakespeare —"those grand and terrible pieces that abound in his most monstrous farces"— that has been the undoing of the English stage.

Even the famous criticism on "Hamlet" has been a good deal misrepresented. Voltaire is vindicating

the employment of the machinery of ghosts, and he dwells on the fitness and fine dramatic effect of the ghost in Shakespeare's play. "I am very far," he goes on to say, "from justifying the tragedy of Hamlet in everything: it is a rude and barbarous piece. . . . Hamlet goes mad in the second act, and his mistress goes mad in the third; the prince slays the father of his mistress, pretending to kill a rat, and the heroine throws herself into the river. They dig her grave on the stage; the grave-diggers jest in a way worthy of them, with skulls in their hands; Hamlet answers their odious grossnesses by extravagances no less disgusting. Meanwhile one of the characters conquers Poland. Hamlet, his mother, and his stepfather drink together on the stage; they sing at table, they wrangle, they fight, they kill; one might suppose such a work to be the fruit of the imagination of a drunken savage. But in the midst of all these rude irregularities, which to this day make the English theatre so absurd and so barbarous, there are to be found in "Hamlet" by a yet greater incongruity sublime strokes worthy of the loftiest geniuses. It seems as if nature had taken a delight in collecting within the brain of Shakespeare all that we can imagine of what is greatest and most powerful, with all that rudeness without wit can contain of what is lowest and most detestable."

If one were to retort upon this that anybody with a true sense of poetry would sacrifice all the plays

that Voltaire ever wrote, his eight-and-twenty tragedies, and half-score of comedies, for the soliloquy in "Hamlet," King Henry at Towton Fight, or "Roses, their sharp spines being gone," there would be truth in such a retort, but it would be that brutal truth, which is always very near being the most subtle kind of lie. Nature wrought a miracle for us by producing Shakespeare, as she did afterwards in an extremely different way for France by producing Voltaire. Miracles, however, have necessarily a very demoralizing effect. A prodigy of loaves and fishes, by slackening the motives to honest industry, must in the end multiply paupers. The prodigy of such amazing results from such glorious carelessness as Shakespeare's, has plunged hundreds of men of talent into a carelessness most inglorious, and made our acting stage a mock. It is quite true that the academic rule is better fitted for mediocrity than for genius; but we may perhaps trust genius to make a way for itself. It is mediocrity that needs laws and prescriptions for its most effective fertilization, and the enormous majority even of those who can do good work are still mediocre. We have preferred the methods of lawless genius, and are left with rampant lawlessness and no genius. The very essence of the old French tragedy was painstaking, and painstaking has had its unfailing and exceeding great reward. When people whose taste has been trained in the traditions of romantic and naturalistic art, or even not trained at all except in indolence and pre-

sumption, yawn over French alexandrines, let them remember that Goethe at any rate thought it worth while to translate "*Mahomet*" and "*Tancrède.*"

An eminent German writer on Voltaire has recently declared the secret of the French classic dramaturgy to be that the drama was a diversion of the court. "The personages have to speak not as befits their true feelings, their character, and the situation, but as is seemly in the presence of a king and a court; not truth, nature, and beauty, but etiquette, is the highest law of the dramatic art." This may partially explain how it was that a return to some features of the classic form, its dignity, elevation, and severity, came to take place in France, but no explanation can be at all satisfactory which reduces so distinct and genuine a manner of dramatic expression to a mere outside accident. Corneille, Racine, Voltaire, treated their tragic subjects as they did, with rigorous concentration of action, stately consistency of motive, and in a solemn and balanced measure, because these conditions answered to intellectual qualities of their own, an affinity in themselves for elegance, clearness, elevation, and a certain purified and weighty wisdom. It is true that they do not unseal those deep-hidden fountains of thought and feeling and music, which flow so freely at the waving of Shakespeare's wand. We are not swiftly carried from a scene of clowns up to some sublime pinnacle of the seventh heaven, whence we see the dark abysses that lie about the path of human

action, as well as all its sweet and shadowed places. Only let us not unjustly suppose that we are deciding the merits of the old French dramaturgy, its severe structure and stately measure, by answering the question, which no English nor German writer can ever seriously put, as to the relative depth and vision in poetic things of Shakespeare and Voltaire. Nor can we be expected to be deeply moved by a form of art that is so unfamiliar to us. It is not a question whether we ought to be so deeply moved. The too susceptible Marmontel describes how on the occasion of a visit to Ferney, Voltaire took him into his study and placed a manuscript into his hands. It was "*Tancrède,*" which was just finished. Marmontel eagerly read it, and he tells us how he returned to the author, his face all bathed in tears. "Your tears," said Voltaire, " tell me all that it most concerns me to know." The most supercilious critic may find this very "*Tancrède*" worth reading, when he remembers that Gibbon thought it splendid and interesting, and that Goethe found it worth translating. One could hardly be convicted now of want of sensibility, if all Voltaire's tragedy together failed to bathe one's face in tears, but this is a very bad reason for denying that it has other merits than pathos.

We cannot, indeed, compare the author of "*Zaïre*" and "*Tancrède*" with the great author of " *Cinna*" and " *Polyeucte,*" any more than in another kind we can compare Gray with Milton. Voltaire is the very genius of correctness, elegance, and grace, and if the

reader would know what this correctness means, he will find a most wholesome exercise in reading Voltaire's notes on some of the most celebrated of Corneille's plays. But in masculine energy and in poetic weightiness, as well as in organ-like richness of music, Voltaire certainly must be pronounced inferior to his superb predecessor. There is a certain thinness pervading the whole of his work for the stage, the conception of character, the dramatic structure, and the measure alike. Undoubtedly we may frequently come upon weighty and noble lines, of fine music and lofty sense. But there is on the whole what strikes one as a fatal excess of facility, and a fatal defect of poetic saliency. The fluent ease of the verse destroys the impression of strength. "Your friend," wrote Madame du Châtelet once of her friend, "has had a slight bout of illness, and you know that when he is ill, he can do nothing but write verses." We do not know whether the Marquise meant alexandrines, or those graceful verses of society of which Voltaire was so incomparable a master. It is certain that he wrote "*Zaïre*" in three weeks and "*Olympie*" in six days, though, with respect to the latter we may well agree with the friend who told the author that he should not have rested on the seventh day. However that may be, there is a quality about his tragic verse which to one fresh from the sonorous majesty and dignified beauty of "*Polyeucte,*" or even the fine gravity of "*Tartufe,*" vibrates too lightly in the ear. Least of

all may we compare him to Racine, whose two great tragedies of "*Iphigénie*" and "*Athalie*" Voltaire himself declared to mark the nearest approach ever made to dramatic perfection. There is none of the mixed austerity and tenderness, height and sweetness, grace and firmness, that blend together with such invisible art and unique contrivance in the poet whose verses taught Fénelon and Massillon how to make music in their prose. To this Voltaire could only have access from without, for he lacked the famous master's internal depth, seriousness, and veneration of soul. We know how little this approach from without can avail, and how vainly a man follows the harmonious grace of a style, when he lacks the impalpable graces of spirit that made the style live. It is only when grave thoughts and benignant aspirations and purifying images move with even habit through the mind, that a man masters the noblest expression. De Maistre, to whom Voltaire's name was the symbol for all that is accursed, admitted the nobleness of his work in tragedy, but he instantly took back the grudged praise by saying that even here he resembles his two great rivals only as a clever hypocrite resembles a saint. Malignantly expressed, there is in this some truth.

It was one of the elements in the plan of dramatic reform that sprang up in Voltaire's mind during his residence in England, that the subjects of tragedy should be more masculine, and that love should cease

to be an obligatory ingredient. "It is nearly always the same piece, the same knot, formed by jealousy and a breach, and united by marriage; it is a perpetual coquetry, a simple comedy in which princes are actors, and in which occasionally blood is spilt for form's sake." This he counted a mistake, for, as he justly said, the heart is but lightly touched by a lover's woes, while it is profoundly softened by the anguish of a mother just about to lose her son. Thus in *"Mérope"* we have maternal sentiment made the spring of what is probably the best of Voltaire's tragedies, abounding in a just vehemence, compact, full of feeling at once exalted and natural, and moving with a sustained energy that is not a too common mark of his work. It was the same conviction of the propriety of making tragedy a means of expressing other emotions than that which is so apt to degenerate into an insipidity, which dictated the composition and novel treatment of the Roman subjects, *"Brutus"* and *"La Mort de César."* Here the French drama first became in some degree truly political. His predecessors when they handled a historic theme did so, not from the historic or social point of view, but as the illustration, or rather the suggestion, of some central human passion. In the *"Cinna"* of Corneille the political bearings, the moral of benevolent despotism which Bonaparte found in it, were purely incidental, and were distinctly subordinate to the portrayal of character and the movement of feeling. In *"Brutus"* the whole action lies in the region of

great public affairs, and of the passions which these affairs stir in noble characters, without any admixture of purely private tenderness. In *"La Mort de César"* we are equally in the heroics of public action. *"Rome Sauvée,"* of which the subject is the conspiracy of Catiline, and the hero the most eloquent of consuls or men — a part that Voltaire was very fond of filling in private representations, and with distinguished success — is extremely loose and spasmodic in structure, and the speeches sound strained even when put into Cicero's mouth. But here also private insipidities are banished, though perhaps it is only in favor of public insipidities. It is impossible to tell what share, if any, these plays had in spreading that curious feeling about Roman freedom and its most renowned defenders, which is so striking a feature in some of the great episodes of the Revolution. We cannot suspect Voltaire of any design to stir political feeling. He was now essentially aristocratic and courtly in his predilection, without the smallest active wish for an approach to political revolution, if indeed the conception of a change of that kind ever presented itself to him. He was indefatigable in admiring and praising English freedom, but, as has already been said, it was not the laudation of a lover of popular government, but the envy of a man of letters whose life was tormented by censors of the press and the lieutenant of police. Perhaps the only approach to a public purpose in this fancy for his Roman subjects was a lurking idea

of arousing in the nobles, for whom we must remember that his dramatic work was above all designed, not a passion for freedom from the authority of monarchic government, but a passion of a more general kind for energetic patriotism. Voltaire's letters abound with expressions of the writer's belief that he was the witness of an epoch of decay in his own country. He had in truth far too keen and practical and trained an eye not to see how public spirit, political sagacity, national ambition, and even valor had declined in the great orders of France since the age of the Grand Monarch, and how much his country had fallen back in the race of civilization and power. We should be guilty of a very transparent exaggeration of the facts, if any attempt were made to paint Voltaire in the attitude and colors of one transcendentally aspiring to regenerate his countrymen. But there is no difficulty in believing that a man who had lived in England, and knew so much of Prussia, should have seen the fatal enervation which had come upon France, and that with Voltaire's feeling for the stage, he should have dreamed, by means of a more austere subject and more masculine treatment, of reviving the love of wisdom and glory and devotion in connection with country. In a word, the lesson of "*La Mort de César*" or of "*Brutus*" was not a specific admonition to slay tyrants, or to execute stern judgments on sons, but a general example of self-sacrificing patriotism and devoted public honor.

It is often said that Voltaire's Romans are mere creatures of parade and declamation, like the figures of David's paintings, and it is very likely that the theatre infected the French people with that mischievous idea of the Romans, as a nation of declaimers about freedom and the death of tyrants. The true Roman was no doubt very much more like one of our narrow, hard, and able Scotchmen in India than the lofty talkers who delighted the parterre of Paris or Versailles. Unluckily for truth of historical conception, Cicero was, after Virgil, the most potent of Roman memories, and a man of words became with modern writers the favorite type of a people of action. All this, however, is beside the question. Voltaire would have laughed at the idea of any obligation to present either Romans or other personages on the stage with realistic fidelity. The tragic drama with him was the highest of the imaginative and idealistic arts. If he had sought a parallel to it in the plastic arts he would have found one, not in painting, which by reason of the greater flexibility of its material demands a more exact verisimilitude, but in sculpture. Considered as statuesque figures endowed with speech, Brutus, Cæsar, and the rest are noble and impressive. We may protest as vigorously as we know how against any assimilation of the great art of action with the great art of repose. But we can only criticise the individual productions of a given theory, provided we for the moment accept the conditions which the

theory lays down. All art rests upon convention, and if we choose to repudiate any particular set of conventions, we have no more right to criticise the works of those who submit to them than one would have to criticise sculpture, because marble or bronze is not like flesh and blood. Within the conditions of the French classic drama Voltaire's Romans are high and stately figures.

Voltaire's innovations extended beyond the introduction of more masculine treatment. Before his time romantic subjects had been regarded with disfavor, and Corneille's *"Bajazet"* was considered a bold experiment. Racine was more strictly classic, and dramatists went on handling the same ancient fables, " Thebes, or Pelops' line, or the tale of Troy divine," just as the Greeks had done, or just as the painters in the Catholic times had never wearied of painting the two eternal figures of human mother and divine child. Voltaire treated the classic subjects as others treated them, and if *" Œdipe"* misses the depth, delicate reserve and fateful gloom of the Greeks, *"Mérope"* at any rate breathes a fine and tragic spirit. But his restless mind pressed forward into subjects which Racine would have shuddered at, and every quarter of the universe became in turn a portion of the Voltairean stage. *"L'Orphelin de la Chine"* introduces us to China and Genghis Khan, *"Mahomet"* to Arabia and its prophet, *"Tancrède"* to Sicily; in *" Zulime"* we are among Moors, in *"Alzire"* we are with Peruvians. This revolutionary

enlargement of subject was significant of a general and very important enlargement of interest which marked the time, and led presently to those contrasts between the condition of France and the imaginary felicity and nobleness of wilder countries, which did so much to breed an irresistible longing for change. Voltaire's high-minded Scythians, generous Peruvians, and the rest, prepared the way along with other influences for that curious cosmopolitanism, that striking eagerness to believe in the equal virtuousness and devotion inherent in human nature, independently of the religious or social form accidentally imposed upon them, which found its ultimate outcome, first in an ardent passion for social equality, and a depreciation of the special sanctity of the current religion, and next in the ill-fated emancipating and proselytizing aims of the Revolution, and in orators of the human race.

It has usually been thought surprising that Voltaire, consummate wit as he was, should have been so markedly unsuccessful in comedy. Certainly no one with so right a sense of the value of time as Voltaire himself had, will in our day waste many hours over his productions in this order. There are a dozen of them more or less, and we can only hope that they were the most rapid of his writings. Lines of extraordinary vivacity are not wanting, and at their best they offer a certain bustling sprightliness that might have been diverting in actual representation. But the keynote seems to be struck in farce,

rather than in comedy; the intrigue, if not quite as slight as in Molière, is too forced; and the characters are nearly all excessively mediocre in conception. In one of the comedies, "*Le Dépositaire,*" the poet presented the aged patroness of his youth, but the necessity of respecting current ideas of the becoming prevented him from making a great character out of even so striking a figure as Ninon de l'Enclos. "*La Prude*" is a version of Wycherly's "*Plain-dealer,*" and is in respect of force, animation, and the genuine spirit of comedy, very inferior to its admirable original. "*L'Indiscret*" is a sparkling and unconsidered trifle, "*L'Écossaise*" is only a stinging attack on Fréron, and "*L'Enfant Prodigue,*" though greater pains were taken with it, has none of the glow of dramatic feeling. The liveliest of all is "*La Femme qui a Raison,*" a short comedy of situation, which for one reading is entertaining in the closet, and must be excellent on the stage. It is very slight, however, and as usual verges on farce.

This inferiority of Voltaire's ought not to astonish any one who has reflected how much concentrated feeling and what profundity of vision go to the production of great comedy, and how in the mind of the dramatist, as in the movement of human life, comedy lies close to portentous tragedy. The author of the "*Bourgeois Gentilhomme*" and "*L'Avare*" was also the creator of the "*Misanthrope,*" that inscrutable piece, where, without plot, fable, or intrigue, we see a section of the polished

life of the time, men and women paying visits, making and receiving compliments, discoursing upon affairs with easy lightness, flitting backwards and forwards with a thousand petty hurries, and among these one strange, rough, hoarse, half-sombre figure, moving solitarily with a chilling reality in the midst of frolicking shadows. Voltaire entered too eagerly into the interests of the world, was by temperament too exclusively sympathetic and receptive and social, to place himself even in imagination thus outside of the common circle. Without capacity for this, there is no comedy of the first order; without serious consciousness of contrasts, no humor that endures. Shakespeare, Molière, and even Aristophanes, each of them unsurpassed writers of mere farce, were one and all, though with vast difference of degree, masters of a tragic breadth of vision. Voltaire had moods of petulant spleen, but who feels that he ever saw, much less brooded over, the dark cavernous regions of human nature? Without this we may have brilliant pleasantry of surprise, inimitable caricature, excellent comedy of society, but of the veritable comedy of human character and life, nothing.

In dazzling and irresistible caricature Voltaire has no equal. There is no deep humor, as in *"Don Quixote,"* or *"Tristram Shandy,"* which Voltaire did not care for, or Richter's *"Siebenkäs,"* which he would not have cared for any more than de Staël did. He was too purely intellectual, too argumentative, too geometrical, and cared too much for illus-

trating a principle. But in "*Candide*," "*Zadig*," "*L'Ingénu*," wit is as high as mere wit can go. They are better than "*Hudibras*," because the motive is broader and more intellectual. Rapidity of play, infallible accuracy of stroke, perfect copiousness, and above all a fresh and unflagging spontaneity, combine with a surprising invention, to give these stories a singular quality, of which we most effectively observe the real brilliance by comparing them with the too numerous imitations that their success has unhappily invited since.

It is impossible to omit from the most cursory study of Voltaire's work, that too famous poem which was his favorite amusement during some of the best years of his life, which was the delight of all who could by any means get the high favor of sight or hearing of so much as a canto of it, and which is now always spoken of, when it happens to be spoken of at all, with extreme abhorrence. The "*Pucelle*" offends two modern sentiments, the love of modesty, and the love of the heroic personages of history. The moral sense and the historic sense have both been sharpened in some respects since Voltaire, and a poem which not only abounds in immodesty, and centres the whole action in an indecency of conception, but also fastens this gross chaplet round the memory of a great deliverer of the poet's own country, seems to offer a double outrage to an age when relish for licentious verse has gone out of fashion, and reverence for the heroic dead has come

in. Still the fact that the greatest man of his time should have written one of the most unseemly poems that exist in any tongue, is worth trying to understand. Voltaire, let us remember, had no special turn, like Gibbon or Bayle, least of all like the unclean Swift, for extracting a malodorous diversion out of grossness or sensuality. His writings betray no irresistible passion for flying to an indelicacy, nor any of the vapid lasciviousness of some more modern French writers. The *"Pucelle"* is at least the wit of a rational man, and not the prying beastliness of a satyr. It is wit worse than poorly employed, but it is purity itself compared with some of the nameless abominations with which Diderot besmirched his imagination. The *"Persian Letters"* contain what we should now account passages of extreme licentiousness, yet Montesquieu was assuredly no libertine. Voltaire's life again was never indecent or immoderate from the point of view of the manners of the time. A man of grave character and untarnished life, like Condorcet, did not scruple to defend a poem, in which it is hard for us to see anything but a most indecorous burlesque of a most heroic subject. He insists that books which divert the imagination without heating or seducing it, which by gay and pleasurable images fill up those moments of exhaustion that are useless alike for labor and meditation, have the effect of inclining men to gentleness and indulgence.

The fact is that in amusing himself by the

"Pucelle," Voltaire was only giving literary expression to a kind of view which had already in the society of the time found for itself a thoroughly practical expression. The people among whom he lived had systematized that freedom from law or restraint in the relations of the sexes, of which his poem is so vivid a representation. The Duke of Richelieu was the irresistible Lovelace of his time, and it was deemed an honor, an honor to which Madame du Châtelet among so many others has title, to have yielded to his fascination. A long and profoundly unedifying chronicle might be drawn up of the memorable gallantries of that time, and for our purpose it might fitly close with the amour of Saint Lambert that led to Madame du Châtelet's death. Of course, these countless gallantries in the most licentious persons of the day, such as Richelieu or Saxe, were neither more nor less than an outbreak of sheer dissoluteness, such as took place among English people of quality in the time of the Restoration. The idle and luxurious, whose imagination is uncontrolled by the discipline of labor and purpose, and to whom the indulgence of their own inclinations is the first and single law of life, are always ready to profit by any relaxation of restraint, which the moral conditions of the moment may permit.

The peculiarity of the licence of France in the middle of the eighteenth century is, that it was looked upon with complacency by the great intellectual leaders of opinion. It took its place in the

progressive formula. What austerity was to other forward movements, licence was to this. It is not difficult to perceive how so extraordinary a circumstance came to pass. Chastity was the supreme virtue in the eyes of the Church, the mystic key to Christian holiness. Continence was one of the most sacred of the pretensions by which the organized preachers of superstition claimed the reverence of men and women. It was identified, therefore, in a particular manner with that Infamous, against which the main assault of the time was directed. So men contended, more or less expressly, first, that continence was no commanding chief among virtues, then that it was a very superficial and easily practised virtue, finally that it was no virtue at all, but if sometimes a convenience, generally an impediment to free human happiness. These disastrous sophisms show the peril of having morality made an appendage of a set of theological mysteries, because the mysteries are sure in time to be dragged into the open air of reason, and moral truth crumbles away with the false dogmas with which it had got mixed.

"If," says Condorcet, "we may treat as useful the design to make superstition ridiculous in the eyes of men given to pleasures, and destined, by the very want of self-control which makes pleasures attractive to them, to become one day the unfortunate victims or the mischievous instruments of that vile tyrant of humanity; if the affectation of austerity in manners, if the excessive value attached to purity,

only serves the hypocrites who by putting on the easy mask of chastity can dispense with all virtues, and cover with a sacred veil the vices most pernicious to society, hardness of heart and intolerance; if by accustoming men to treat as so many crimes faults from which honorable and conscientious persons are not exempt, we extend over the purest souls the power of that dangerous caste, which to rule and disturb the earth, has constituted itself exclusively the interpreter of heavenly justice — then we shall see in the author of the '*Pucelle*' no more than a foe to hypocrisy and superstition."

It helps us to realize the infinite vileness of a system, like that of the Church in the last century, which could engender in men of essential nobleness of character like Condorcet, an antipathy so violent as to shut the eyes of their understanding to the radical sophistry of such pleading as this. Let one reflection out of many serve to crush the whole of it. The key to effective life is unity of life, and unity of life means as much as anything else the unity of our human relations. Our identity does by no means consist in a historic continuity of tissues, but in an organic moral coherency of relation. It is this, which alone, if we consider the passing shortness of our days, makes life a whole, instead of a parcel of thrums bound together by an accident. Is not every incentive and every concession to vagrant appetite a force that enwraps a man in gratification of self, and severs him from duty to others, and so a force of

dissolution and dispersion? It might be necessary to pull down the Church, but the worst church that has ever prostituted the name and the idea of religion cannot be so disastrous to society as a gospel that systematically relaxes self-control as being an unmeaning curtailment of happiness. The apologists for the "*Pucelle*" exhibit the doctrine of individualism in one of its worst issues. "Your proof that this is really the best of all possible worlds is excellent," says Candide for his famous last word, "but we must cultivate our garden." The same principle of exclusive self-regard, applied to the gratification of sense, passed for a satisfactory defence of libertinage. In the first form it destroys a state, in the second it destroys the family.

It is easier to account for Voltaire's contempt for the mediæval superstition about purity than his want of respect for a deliverer of France. The explanation lies in the conviction which had such power in Voltaire's own mind and with which he impregnated to such a degree the minds of others, that the action of illiterate and unpolished times can have no life in it. His view of progress was a progress of art and knowledge, and heroic action which was dumb, or which was not expressed in terms of intellect, was to the eighteenth century, and to Voltaire at least as much as to any other of its leaders, mere barbaric energy. In the order of taste, for instance, he can find only words of cool and limited praise for Homer, while for the polish and elegance of Virgil his

admiration is supreme. The first was the bard of a rude time, while round the second cluster all the associations of a refined and lettered age. A self-devotion that was only articulate in the jargon of mystery and hallucination, and that was surrounded with rude and irrational circumstance, with ignorance, brutality, visions, miracle, was encircled by no halo in the eyes of a poet who found no nobleness where he did not find a definite intelligence, and who rested all his hopes and interests on the long distance set by time and civilization between ourselves and such conditions and associations as belong to the name of Joan of Arc. The foremost men of the eighteenth century despised Joan of Arc, whenever they had occasion to think of her, for the same reason which made them despise Gothic architecture. "When," says Voltaire in one place, "the arts began to revive, they revived as Goths and Vandals; what unhappily remains to us of the architecture and sculpture of these times is a fantastic compound of rudeness and filigree." Just so, even Turgot, while protesting how dear to every sensible heart were the Gothic buildings destined to the use of the poor and the orphan, complained of the outrage done by their rude architecture to the delicacy of our sight. Characters like Joan of Arc ranked in the same rude and fantastic order, and respect for them meant that respect for the middle age which was treason to the new time. Men despised her, just as they despised the majesty and beauty of the great church

at Rheims where she brought her work to a climax, or the lofty grace and symmetry of the church of St. Ouen, within sight of which her life came to its terrible end.

Henry the Fourth was a hero with Voltaire, for no better reason than that he was the first great tolerant, the earliest historic indifferent. The *"Henriade"* is important only because it helped to popularize the type of its hero's character, and so to promote the rapidly growing tendency in public opinion towards a still wider version of the policy of the Edict of Nantes. The reign of Louis XIV. had thrown all previous monarchs into obscurity, and the French king who showed a warmer and more generous interest in the happiness of his subjects than any they ever had, was forgotten, until Voltaire brought him into fame. It was just, however, because Henry's exploits were so glorious, and at the same time so near in point of time, that he made an indifferent hero for an epic poem. "He should never choose for an epic poem history," said Hume very truly, "the truth of which is well known; for no fiction can come up to the interest of the actual story and incidents of the singular life of Henry IV." These general considerations, however, as to the propriety of the subject are hardly worth entering upon. How could any true epic come out of that age, or find fountains in that critical, realistic, and polemical soul? To fuse a long narrative of heroic adventure in animated, picturesque, above all, in

sincere verse, is an achievement reserved for men with a steadier glow, a firmer, simpler, more exuberant and more natural poetic feeling, than was possible in that time of mean shifts, purposeless public action, and pitiful sacrifice of private self-respect. Virgil was stirred by the greatness of the newly united empire, Tasso by the heroic march of Christendom against pagan oppressors, Milton by the noble ardor of our war for public rights. What long and glowing inspiration was possible to a would-be courtier, thrust into the Bastille for wanting to fight a noble who had had him caned by lackeys? Besides, an epic, of all forms of poetic composition, most demands concentrated depth, and Voltaire was too widely curious and vivacious on the intellectual side to be capable of this emotional concentration.

But it is superfluous to give reasons why Voltaire's epic should not be a great poem. The *"Henriade"* itself is there the most indisputable of arguments. Of poems whose names are known out of literary histories and academic catalogues, it is perhaps the least worth reading in any language by any one but a professional student of letters. It is less worth reading than Lucan's *"Pharsalia,"* because it is more deliberately artificial and gratuitously unspontaneous. "Paradise Regained," which it is too ready a fashion among us to pronounce dull, still contains at least three pieces of superb and unsurpassed description, never fails in grave majestic verse, and is at the worst free from all the dreary

apparatus of phantom and impersonation and mystic vision, which have never jarred so profoundly with sense of poetic fitness, as when associated with so political and matter-of-fact a hero as Henry IV. The reader has no illusion in such transactions as Saint Louis taking Henry into heaven and hell, Sleep hearing from her secret caves, the Winds at sight of him falling into Silence, and Dreams, children of Hope, flying to cover the hero with olive and laurel. How can we overcome our repugnance to that strange admixture of real and unreal matter which presents us with a highly colored picture of the Temple of Love, where in the forecourt sits Joy, with Mystery, Desire, Complaisance, on the soft turf by her side, while in the inner sanctuary haunt Jealousy, Suspicion, Malice, Fury; while the next canto describes

L'église toujours une et partout étendue,
Libre, mais sous un chef, adorant en tout lieu,
Dans le bonheur des saints, la grandeur de son Dieu.
Le Christ, de nos péchés victime renaissante,
De ses élus chéris nourriture vivante,
Descend sur les autels à ses yeux éperdus,
Et lui découvre un Dieu sous un pain qui n'est plus.[1]

Voltaire congratulated himself in his preface that he had come sufficiently near theological exactitude, and to this qualification, which is so new for poetry, the critic may add elegance and flow; but neither elegance nor theological exactitude reconciles us to an epic that has neither a stroke of sublimity nor a

[1] "*Henriade*," x, 485-491.

touch of pathos, that presents no grandeur in character, and no hurrying force and movement in action. Frederick the Great used to speak of Voltaire as the French Virgil, but then Frederick's father had never permitted him to learn Latin, and if he ever read Virgil at all, it must have been in some of the jingling French translations. Even so, with the episodes of Dido and of Nisus and Euryalus in our minds, we may wonder how so monstrous a parallel could have occurred even to Frederick, who was no critic, between two poets who have hardly a quality in common. If the reader wishes to realize how nearly insipid even Voltaire's genius could become when working in unsuitable forms, he may turn from any canto of the "*Henriade*" to any page of Lucretius or the "Paradise Lost." A French critic quotes the famous reviewer's sentence, concluding an analysis of some epic, to the effect that on the whole, when all is summed up, the given epic was "one of the best that had appeared in the course of the current year;" and insists that Voltaire's piece will not at any rate perish in the oblivion of poetic annuals like these. If not, the only reason lies in that unfortunate tenderness for the bad work of famous men, which makes of so much reading time worse than wasted. "The unwise," said Candide, "value every word in an author of repute."

CHAPTER IV.

WITH FREDERICK THE GREAT.

The Marquise du Châtelet died under circumstances that were tragical enough to herself, but which disgust the grave, while they give a grotesque amusement to those who look with cynical eye upon what they choose to treat as the great human comedy. In 1749 the friendship of sixteen years thus came to its end, and Voltaire was left without the tie that, in spite of too frequent breaking away from it, had brought him much happiness and good help so far on the road. He was now free, disastrously free as the event proved, to accept the invitations with which he had so long been pressed to take up his residence with the king who may dispute with him the claim to be held the most extraordinary man of that century.

Neither credit nor peace followed Voltaire in his own land. Louis XV., perhaps the most worthless of all the creatures that monarchy has ever corrupted, always disliked him. The whole influence of the court and the official world had been uniformly

exerted against him. Many years went by before he could even win a seat in the academy, a distinction, it may be added, to which Diderot, hardly second to Voltaire in originality and power, never attained to the end of his days. Madame de Pompadour, the protectress of Quesnay, was Voltaire's first friend at court. He said of her long afterwards that in the bottom of her heart she belonged to the philosophers, and did as much as she could to protect them. She had known him in her obscurer and more reputable days, and she charged him with the composition of a court-piece (1745), to celebrate the marriage of the dauphin. The task was satisfactorily performed, and honors which had been refused to the author of "*Zaïre*," "*Alzire*," and the "*Henriade*," were at once given to the writer of the "*Princess of Navarre*," which Voltaire himself ranked as a mere farce of the fair. He was made gentleman of the chamber and historiographer of France. He disarmed the devout by the Pope's acceptance of "*Mahomet*," and by a letter which he wrote to Father Latour, head of his former school, protesting his affection for religion and his esteem for the Jesuits. Condorcet most righteously pronounces that, in spite of the art with which he handles his expressions in this letter, it would undoubtedly have been far better to give up the academy than to write it. It answered its purpose, and Voltaire was admitted of the forty (May, 1746). This distinction, however, was far from securing for him the tranquillity which he had hoped

from it, and worse libels tormented him than before. The court sun ceased to shine. Madame de Pompadour gave to Crébillon a preference which Voltaire resented with more agitation than any preference of Madame Pompadour's ought to have stirred in the breast of a strong man.

We cannot, however, too constantly remember not to ask from Voltaire the heroic. He was far too sympathetic, too generously eager to please, too susceptible to opinion. Of that stern and cold stuff which supports a man in firm march and straight course, giving him the ample content of self-respect, he probably had less than any one of equal prominence has ever had. Instead of writing his tragedy as well as he knew how, and then leaving it to its destiny, he wrote it as well as he knew how, and then went in disguise to the café of the critics to find out what his inferiors had to say about his work. Instead of composing his court-piece, and taking such reward as offered, or disdaining such ignoble tasks — and nobody knew better than he how ignoble they were — he sought to catch some crumb of praise by fawningly asking of the vilest of men, *Trajan est-il content?* Make what allowance we will for difference of time and circumstance, such an attitude to such a man, whether in Seneca towards Nero, or Voltaire towards Louis XV., is a baseness that we ought never to pardon and never to extenuate. Whether or no there be in the human breast that natural religion of goodness and virtue which was

the sheet-anchor of Voltaire's faith, there is at least a something in the hearts of good men which sets a vast gulf between them and those who are to the very depths of their souls irredeemably saturated with corruption.

We may permit ourselves to hope that it was the consciousness of the humiliation of such relations as these, rather than the fact that they did not answer their own paltry purpose, that made Voltaire resolve a second time to shake the dust of his own country from off his feet. In July, 1750, he reached Potsdam, and was installed with sumptuous honor in the court of Frederick the Great, twenty-four years since he had installed himself with Mr. Falkener, the English merchant at Wandsworth. Diderot was busy with the first volume of the Encyclopædia, and Rousseau had just abandoned his second child in the hospital for foundlings. If the visit to London did everything for Voltaire, the visit to Berlin did nothing. There was no Prussia, as there was an England. To travel from the dominion of George II. to the dominion of his famous nephew, was to go from the full light of the eighteenth century back to the dimness of the fifteenth. An academy of sciences, by the influence of Sophie-Charlotte, and under the guidance of Leibnitz, had been founded at Berlin at the beginning of the eighteenth century; but Frederick William had an angry contempt for every kind of activity except drill and the preaching of orthodox theology, and during his reign the acad-

emy languished in obscurity. The accession of Frederick II. was the signal for its reconstitution, and the revival of its activity under the direction of Maupertuis. To the sciences of experiment and observation, which had been its original objects, was added a department of speculative philosophy. The court was materialist, skeptical, Voltairean, all at the same time; but the academy as a body was theologically orthodox, and it was wholly and purely metaphysical in its philosophy. We may partly understand the distance at which Berlin was then behind Paris, when we read d'Alembert's just remonstrances with Frederick against giving as subjects for prize-essays such metaphysical problems as "The search for a primary and permanent force, at once substance and cause."

Whatever activity existed outside of the court and the academy was divided between the dialectic of Protestant scholasticism, and Wolf's exposition and development of Leibnitz. In literature proper there arose with the accession of Frederick a small group of essentially secondary critics, of whom Sulzer was the best, without the vivid and radiant force of either Voltaire or Diderot, and without the deep inspiration and invention of those who were to follow them, and to place Germany finally on a level with England and France. Lessing, the founder of the modern German literature, was at this time a youth of twenty-two, and by a striking turn of chance was employed by Voltaire in putting into

German his pleadings in the infamous Hirschel case. It was not then worth while for a stranger to learn the language in which Lessing had not yet written, and Voltaire, who was a master of English and Italian, never knew more German than was needed to curse a postilion. Leibnitz wrote everything of importance in Latin or French, the Berlin academy conducted its transactions first in Latin, next and for many years to come in French, and one of its earliest presidents, a man of special competence, pronounced German to be a noble but frightfully barbarized tongue. The famous Wolf had done his best to make the tongue of his country literate, but even his influence was unequal to the task.

Society was in its foundations not removed from the mediæval. The soldiers with whom Frederick won Zorndorf and Leuthen, like the Russians and Austrians whom he defeated on those bloody days, were not more nor less than serfs. Instead of philosophers like Newton and Locke, he had to find the pride and safety of his country in swift-rushing troopers like Winterfeld and Ziethen. A daring cavalry-charge in season was for the moment more to Prussia than any theory why it is that an apple falls, and a new method of drill much more urgent than a new origin for ideas. She was concerned not with the speculative problem of the causes why the earth keeps its place in the planetary system, but with the practical problem how Prussia was to make her place in the system of Europe. Prussia was then far more

behind France in all thought and all arts, save the soldier's, than England was in front of France.

Voltaire had nothing to learn at Berlin, and may we not add, as the king was a rooted Voltairean long before this, he had nothing to teach there? The sternest barrack in Europe was not a field in which the apostle of free and refined intelligence could sow seed with good hope of harvest. Voltaire at this time, we have to recollect, was in the public mind only a poet, and perhaps was regarded, if not altogether by Frederick, certainly by those who surrounded him, as much in the same order of being with Frederick's flute, fitted by miracle with a greater number of stops. "I don't give you any news of literature," d'Alembert wrote from Potsdam in 1763, "for I don't know any, and you know how barren literature is in this country, where no one except the king concerns himself with it." There is no particular disgrace to Berlin or its king in this. Their task was very definite, and it was only a pleasant error of Frederick's rather fantastic youth to suppose that this task lay in the direction of polite letters. The singer of the "*Henriade*" was naturally of different quality and turn of mind from a hero who had at least as hard an enterprise in his hand as that of Henry IV. Voltaire and Frederick were the two leaders of the two chief movements then going on, in the great work of the transformation of the old Europe into the new. But the movements were in different matter, demanded vastly

different methods, and, as is so often the case, the scope of each was hardly visible to the pursuer of the other. Voltaire's work was to quicken the activity and proclaim the freedom of human intelligence, and to destroy the supremacy of an old spiritual order. Frederick's work was to shake down the old political order. The sum of their efforts was the definite commencement of that revolution in the thought and the political conformation of the West, of which the momentous local revolution in France must, if we take a sufficiently wide survey before and after, be counted a secondary phase. The conditions of the order which was established after the confusion of the fall of the Roman power before the inroads of the barbarians, and which constituted the Europe of the early and middle ages, are now tolerably well understood, and the historic continuity or identity of that order is typified in two institutions, which by the middle of the eighteenth century had reached very different stages of decay, and possessed very different powers of resisting attack. One was the German Empire and the other was the Holy Catholic Church. Frederick dealt a definite blow to the first, and Voltaire did the same to the second.

Those who read history and biography with a sturdy and childish preconception that the critical achievements in the long course of the world's progress must of necessity have fallen to the lot of the salt of the earth, will find it hard to associate the beginning of the great overt side of modern

movement with the two men who versified and wrangled together for some two and a half years in the middle of the eighteenth century at Berlin. It is hard to think of the old state, with all its memories of simple enthusiasm and wild valor and rude aspiration after some better order, finally disappearing into the chaos for which it was more than ripe, under the impulse of an arch cynic. And it is hard, too, to think that the civilizing religion which was founded by a Jew, and first seized by Jews, noblest and holiest of their race, got its first and severest blow from one who was not above using a Jew to cheat Christians out of their money. But the fact remains of the vast work which this amazing pair had to do, and did.

The character of the founder of the greatness of Prussia, if indeed we may call founder one rather than another member of that active, clear, and far-sighted line, can have no attraction for those who require as an indispensable condition of fealty that their hero shall have either purity, or sensibility, or generosity, or high honor, or manly respect for human nature. Frederick's rapidity and firmness of will, his administrative capacity, his military talent, were marvellous and admirable enough; but on the moral side of character, in his relations to men and women, in his feeling for the unseen, in his ideas of truth and beauty, he belonged to a type which is not altogether uncommon. In his youth he had much of a sort of shallow sensibility, which more sympathetic

usage might possibly have established and to some small extent even deepened, but which the curiously rough treatment that his pacific tastes and frivolous predilections provoked his father to inflict, turned in time into the most bitter and profound kind of cynicism that the world knows. No cynic is so hard and insensible as the man who has once had sensibility, perhaps because the consciousness that he was in earlier days open to more generous impressions persuades him that the fault of any change in his own view of things must needs lie in the world's villainy, which he has now happily for himself had time to find out. Sensibility of a true sort, springing from natural fountains of simple and unselfish feeling, can neither be corrupted nor dried up. But at its best, Frederick's sensibility was of the literary and æsthetic kind, rather than the humane and social. It concerned taste and expression, and had little root in the recognition as at first-hand of those facts of experience, of beauty and tenderness and cruelty and endurance, which are the natural objects that permanently quicken a sensitive nature. In a word, Frederick's was the conventional sensibility of the French literature of the time; a harmless thing enough in the poor souls that only poured themselves out in bad romance and worse verse, but terrible when it helped to fill with contempt for mankind an absolute monarch, with the most perfect military machine in Europe at his command. Frederick is constantly spoken of as a man typical

of his century. In truth he was throughout his life in ostentatious opposition to his century on its most remarkable side. There has never been any epoch whose foremost men had such faith and hope in the virtues of humanity. There has never been any prominent man who despised humanity so bitterly and unaffectedly as Frederick despised it.

We know what to think of a man who writes a touching and pathetic letter condoling with a friend on the loss of his wife, and on the same day makes an epigram on the dead woman; who never found so much pleasure in a friendly act as when he could make it the means of hurting the recipient; whose practical pleasantries were always spiteful and sneering and cruel. As we read of his tricks on d'Argens or Pöllnitz, we feel how right Voltaire was in borrowing a nickname for him from a mischievous brute whom he kept in his garden. He presented d'Argens with a house; when d'Argens went to take possession he found the walls adorned with pictures of all the most indecent and humiliating episodes of his own life. This was a type of Frederick's delicacy towards some of those whom he honored with his friendship. It is true that, except Voltaire and Maupertuis, most of the French philosophers whom Frederick seduced into coming to live at Berlin were not too good for the corporal's horse-play of which they were the victims. But then we know, further, what to think of a man whose self-respect fails to proscribe gross and

unworthy companions. He is either a lover of parasites, which Frederick certainly was not, or else the most execrable cynic, the cynic who delights in any folly or depravity that assures him how right he is in despising "that damned race."

Frederick need not have summoned the least worthy French freethinkers, men like d'Argens and La Mettrie and De Prades, in their own way as little attractive in life and in doctrine as any monk or Geneva preacher, to warrant him in thinking meanly of mankind. If any one wants to know what manner of spirit this great temporal deliverer of Europe was of, he may find what he seeks in the single episode of the negotiations at Klein-Schnellendorf in 1741. There, although he had made and was still bound by a solemn treaty of alliance with France, he entered into secret engagements with the Hungarian queen, to be veiled by adroitly pretended hostilities. Even if, as an illustrious apologist of the Prussian king is reduced to plead, this is in a certain fashion defensible, on the ground that France and Austria were both playing with loaded dice, and therefore the other dicer of the party was in self-defence driven to show himself their superior in these excellent artifices, there still seems a gratuitous infamy in hinting to the Austrian general, as Frederick did, how he might assault with advantage the French enemy, Frederick's own ally at the moment. This was the author of the plea for political morality, called the Anti-

Machiavelli, whose publication Voltaire had superintended the year before, and for that matter, had done his best to prevent. Still, as Frederick so graciously said of his new guest and old friend: "He has all the tricks of a monkey; but I shall make no sign, for I need him in my study of French style. One may learn good things from a scoundrel: I want to know his French; what is his morality to me?" And so a royal statesman may have the manners of the coarsest corporal, and the morality of the grossest cynic, and still have both the eye to discern, and the hand to control, the forces of a great forward movement.

Frederick had the signal honor of accepting his position, and taking up with an almost perfect fortitude the burden which it laid upon him. "We are not masters of our own lot," he wrote to Voltaire, immediately after his accession to the throne; "the whirlwind of circumstances carries us away, and we must suffer ourselves to be carried away." And what he said in this hour of exaltation he did not deny nearly twenty years later, when his fortunes seemed absolutely desperate. "If I had been born a private person," he wrote to him in 1759, "I would give up everything for love of peace; but a man is bound to take on the spirit of his position." "Philosophy teaches us to do our duty, to serve our country faithfully at the price of our blood and our ease, to sacrifice for it our whole existence." Men are also called upon by their country to abstain from sacri-

ficing their existence, and if Frederick's sense of duty to his subjects had been as perfect as it was exceptionally near being so, he would not have carried a phial of poison round his neck. Still on the whole he devoted himself to his career with a temper that was as entirely calculated for the overthrow of a tottering system, as Voltaire's own. It is difficult to tell whether Frederick's steady attention to letters and men of letters, and his praiseworthy endeavors to make Berlin a true academic centre, were due to a real and disinterested love of knowledge, and a sense of its worth to the spirit of man, or still more to weak literary vanity, and a futile idea of universal fame so far as his own productions went, and a purely utilitarian purpose so far as his patronage of the national academy was concerned. One thing is certain, that the philosophy which he learned from French masters, which Voltaire brought in his proper person to Berlin, and to which Frederick to the end of his days was always adding illustrative commentaries, never made any impression on Germany. The teaching of Leibnitz and Wolf stood like a fortified wall in the face of the French invasion, and whatever effective share French speculation had upon Germany, was through the influence of Descartes upon Leibnitz.

The dissolution of the outer framework of the European state-system, for which Frederick's seizure of Silesia was the first clear signal, followed

as it was by the indispensable suppression of the mischievous independence, so called, of barbaric and feudal Poland, where bishops and nobles held a people in the most oppressive bondage, can only concern us here slightly, because it was for the time only indirectly connected with the characteristic work of Voltaire's life. But, though indirect, the connection may be seen at our distance of time to have been marked and unmistakable. The old order and principles of Europe were to receive a new impress, and the decaying system of the middle age to be replaced by a polity of revolution, which should finally change the relations of nations, the types of European government, and the ideas of spiritual control.

In 1733 the war of the Polish succession between Austria and Russia on the one hand, and France and Spain on the other, had given the first great shock to the house of Austria, which was compelled to renounce the pretensions and territory of the Empire in Italy, or nearly all of them, in favor of the Spanish Bourbons, as well as to surrender Lorraine to Stanislaus, with reversion to the crown of France. We may notice in passing that it was at Stanislaus's court of Lunéville that Voltaire and the Marquise du Châtelet passed their last days together. The wars of the Polish succession were remarkable for another circumstance. They were the first occasion of the decisive interference of Russia in western affairs, an only less important

disturbance of Europe than the first great interference of Prussia a few years later. The falling to pieces of the old Europe was as inevitable as, more than twelve centuries before, had been the dissolution of that yet older Europe whose heart had been not Vienna but Rome. Russia and Prussia were not the only novel elements. There was a third from over the sea, the American colonies of France and England.

Roman Europe had been a vast imperial state, with slavery for a base. Then, after the feudal organization had run its course, there was a long and chaotic transition of dynastic and territorial wars, frightfully wasteful of humanity and worse than unfruitful to progress. In vain do historians, intent on vindicating the foregone conclusions of the optimism which a distorted notion about final causes demands or engenders in them, try to show these hateful contests as parts of a harmonious scheme of things, in which many diverse forces move in a mysterious way to a common and happy end. As if any good use, for instance, were served by the transfer, for one of the chief results of the war of the Polish succession, of the Italian provinces of the Empire of the Spanish Bourbons. As if any good or permanent use were served by the wars which ended in the Peace of Utrecht, when victorious England conceded, and with much wisdom conceded, the precise point which she had for so many years been disputing. From the Peace of

Westphalia to the beginning of the Seven Years' War, it is not too much to say that there was a century of purely artificial strife on the continent of Europe, of wars as factious, as merely personal, as unmeaning, as the civil war of the Fronde was all of these things. In speaking roundly of this period, we leave out of account the first Silesian War, because the issue between Prussia and Austria was not decisively fought out until the final death-struggle from 1756 to 1763. It was the entry of Frederick the Great upon the scene, that instantly raised international relations into the region of real matter and changed a strife of dynasties, houses, persons, into a vital competition between old forces and principles and new. The aimless and bloody commotions which had raged over Europe, and ground men's lives to dust in the red mill of battle, came for a time to an end, and their place was taken by a tremendous conflict, on whose issue hung not merely the triumph of a dynasty, but the question of the type to which future civilization was to conform.

In the preliminary war which followed immediately upon the death of Charles VI. in 1740, and which had its beginning in Frederick's invasion of Silesia, circumstances partially marched in the usual tradition, with France and Austria playing opposite sides in an accustomed game. Before the opening of the Seven Years' War the cardinal change of policy and alliances had taken place. We are not

concerned with the court intrigues that brought the change about, with the intricate manœuvres of the Jesuits, or the wounded vanity of Bernis, whose verses Frederick laughed at, or the pique of Pompadour, whom Frederick declined to count an acquaintance. When conflicting forces of tidal magnitude are at work, as they were in the middle of the last century, the play of mere personal aims and ambitions is necessarily of secondary importance; because we may always count upon there being at least one great power that clearly discerns its own vital interest, and is sure therefore to press with steady energy in its own special direction. That power was Austria. One force of this kind is enough to secure a universal adjustment of all the others in their natural places.

The situation was apparently very complex. There were in the middle of the century two great pairs of opposed interests, the interests of France and England on the ocean and in America, and the interests of Austria and Prussia in central Europe. The contest was in each of the two cases much more than a superficial affair of dynasties or division of territory, to meet the requirements of the metaphysical diplomacy of the balance of power. It was a re-opening in far vaster proportions of those profound issues of new religion and old which had only been damned up, and not permanently settled, by the great Peace of Westphalia in 1648. In vaster proportions, not merely because the new struggle

between the Catholic and Protestant powers extended into the new world, but because the forces contained in these two creeds had been widened and developed, and a multitude of indirect consequences, entirely apart from theology and church discipline, depended upon the triumph of Great Britain and Prussia. The Governments of France and Austria represented the feudal and military idea, not in the strength of that idea while it was still alive, but in the narrow and oppressive form of its decay. No social growth was possible under its shadow, for one of its essential conditions was discouragement, active and passive, of commercial industry, the main pathway then open to an advancing people. Again, both France and Austria represented the old type of monarchy, as distinguished alike from the aristocratic oligarchy of England, and the new type of monarchy which Prussia introduced into Europe, frugal, encouraging industry, active in supervision, indefatigable in improving the laws. Let us not omit above all things the splendid religious toleration, of which Prussia set so extraordinarily early an example to Europe. The Protestants whom episcopal tyranny drove from Salzburg found warm hospitality among their northern brethren. While the professors of the reformed faith were denied civil status in France, and subjected to persecution of a mediæval bloodiness, one Christian was counted exactly as another in Prussia. While England was revelling in the infliction of atrocious penal laws on

her Catholic citizens, Prussia extended even to the abhorred Jesuit the shelter which was denied him in Spain and at Rome. The transfer of territory from Austria to Prussia meant the extension of toleration in that territory. Silesia, for instance, no sooner became Prussian, than the University of Breslau, whose advantages had hitherto been rigidly confined to Catholics, was at once compulsorily opened to Protestants and Catholics alike. In criticising Frederick's despotism let us recognize how much enlightenment, how much of what is truly modern, was to be found in the manner in which this despotic power was exercised, long before the same enlightened principles were accepted in other countries.

There is a point of view from which we may justly regard the violent change that was the result of the Seven Years' War, as a truly progressive step. We cannot be as reasonably sure that the old conditions of men's relations in society are in whatever new shape destined to return, as we are sure that it was a good thing to prevent a feudal and jesuitical government like Austria from retaining a purely obstructive power in Europe, and a jesuitical government like France from establishing the same obstructive kind of power in America. The advantages of the final acquisition of America by Protestantism, and the decisive consolidation of Prussia, were not without alloy. History does not present us with these clean balances. It is not at all difficult to see the injurious elements in this victory of the

northern powers, and nobody would be less willing than the present writer to accept either the Prussian polity of Frederick, or the commercial polity of England and her western colonies, as offering final types of wholesome social states. But the alternative was the triumph of a far worse polity than either, the polity of the Society of Jesus.

Even those who claim our respect for the Jesuits as having in the beginning of their course served the very useful purpose of honestly administering that spiritual power which had fallen from the hands of the Popes, who had mischievously entered the ranks and followed the methods of temporal princes, do not deny that within a couple of generations they became a dangerous obstacle to the continuity of European progress. Indeed, it is clear that they grew into the very worst element that has ever appeared in the whole course of European history, because their influence rested on a systematic compromise with moral corruption. They had barely seized the spiritual power in the Catholic countries when it was perceived that as an engine of moral control their supposed power was no power at all; and that the only condition on which they could retain the honor and the political authority which were needful to them was that they should connive at moral depravity. They had the education of the country in their hands, and from the confessor's closet they pulled the wires which moved courts. There was no counter-force, for the mass

of the people was dumb, ignorant, and fettered. Say what we will of the need for a spiritual power, the influence of the Jesuits by the middle of the eighteenth century was cutting off the very root of civilization. This was the veritable Infamous. And this was the influence which the alliance of England and Prussia, a thing accidental enough to all appearance, successfully and decisively checked, because the triumph of the two northern powers was naturally the means of discrediting the Jesuit intrigues in the court of Versailles and elsewhere, and stripping them of those associations of political and material success which had hitherto stood to them in the stead of true spiritual credit.

The peace of 1763 had important territorial consequences. By the treaty of Paris between France, England, and Spain, Great Britain was assured of her possessions on the other side of the Atlantic. By the treaty of Hubertusburg between Austria, Prussia, and Saxony, Prussia was assured of her position as an independent power in Europe. These things were much. But the decisive repulse of the great Jesuit organization was yet more. It was the most important side of the same facts. The immediate occasions of this repulse varied in different countries, and had their origin in different sets of superficial circumstance, but the debility of the courts of Austria and France was the only condition on which such occasions could be seized. The very next year, after the treaties of Paris and Hubertus-

burg, the Society of Jesus was suppressed in France, and its property confiscated. Three years later it was expelled from Spain. Within ten years from the peace of 1763 it was abolished by the virtuous Clement XIV. In Canada, where the order had been extremely powerful, their authority vanished, and with it the probability of establishing in the northern half of the new world those ideas of political absolutism and theological casuistry which were undoing the old. Whatever the accidents which hurried the catastrophe, there were two general causes which really produced it, the revolution in ideas, and the revolution in the seat of material power. If this be a true description of the crisis, we can see sufficiently plainly to what an extent Voltaire and Frederick, while they appeared to themselves to be fellow-workers only in the culture of the muses, were in fact unconsciously co-operating in a far mightier task. When the war was drawing to an end, and Frederick was likely to escape from the calamities which had so nearly overwhelmed him and his kingdom in irretrievable ruin, we find Voltaire writing to d'Alembert thus: "As for Luc" (the nickname borrowed for the king of Prussia from an ape with a trick of biting), "though I ought to be full of resentment against him, yet I confess to you that in my quality of thinking creature and Frenchman, I am heartily content that a certain most devout house has not swallowed Germany up, and that the Jesuits don't

confess at Berlin. Superstition is monstrously powerful towards the Danube." To which his correspondent replied that he quite agreed that the triumph of Frederick was a blessing for France and for philosophy. "These Austrians are insolent Capuchins, whom I would fain see annihilated with the superstition they protect." Here was precisely the issue.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that Frederick consciously and formally recognized the ultimate ends of his policy. Such deliberate marking out of the final destination of their work, imputed to rulers, churchmen, poets, is mostly a figment invented by philosophers. Frederick thought nothing at all about the conformation of the European societies in the twentieth century. It was enough for him to make a strong and independent Prussia, without any far-reaching vision, or indeed without any vision at all, of the effect which a strong and independent Prussia would finally have upon the readjustment of ideas and social forces in western civilization. We are led to a false notion of history, and of all the conditions of political action and the development of nations, by attributing to statesmen deep and far-reaching sight of consequences, which only completed knowledge and some ingenuity enable those who live after to fit into a harmonious scheme. "Fate," says Goethe, "for whose wisdom I entertain all imaginable reverence, often finds in chance, by which it

works, an instrument not over manageable." And the great ruler, knowing this, is content to abstain from playing fate's part, feeling his way slowly to the next step. His compass is only true for a very short distance, and his chart has marks for no long course. To make Prussia strong was the aim of Frederick's life. Hence, although the real destiny of his policy was to destroy the house of Austria, he did not scruple in 1741 to offer to assist Maria Theresa with his best help against all the other invaders of the famous Pragmatic Sanction, which they had solemnly sworn to uphold. Afterwards, and before the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, he sought the alliance of France, but happily for Europe, not until after Kaunitz and Maria Theresa had already secured that blind and misguided power, thus driving him into an alliance with Great Britain. And so chance did the work of fate after all.

It may be said that such a view of the operation of the great forces of the world is destructive of all especial respect and gratitude towards the eminent men, of whom chance and fate have made mere instruments. What becomes of hero-worship, if your hero after all only half knew whither he sought to go, and if those achievements which have done such powerful service were not consciously directed towards the serviceable end? We can only answer that it is not the office of history to purvey heroes, nor always to join appreciation of a set of complex

effects with veneration for this or that performer. For this veneration, if it is to be an intelligent mood, implies insight into the inmost privacy of aim and motive, and this insight, in the case of those whom circumstance raises on a towering pedestal, we can hardly ever count with assurance on finding faithful and authentic. History is perhaps not less interesting for not being distorted into a new hagiography.

It is equally unwarranted to put into Frederick's mind conscious ideas as to the type of monarchy proper for Europe in the epoch of passage from old systems. Once more, he thought of his own country, and his own country only, in all those wise measures of internal government which have been so unjustly and so childishly thrust by historians into the second place behind his exploits as a soldier, as if the civil activity of the period between 1763, when peace was made, and 1786, when he died, was not fully as remarkable in itself, and fully as momentous in its results, as the military activity of the period between 1763 and 1740. There is in men of the highest governing capacity, like Richelieu, or Cromwell, or Frederick, an instinct for good order and regular administration. They insist upon it for its own sake, independently of its effects either on the happiness of subjects, or on the fundamental policy and march of things. If Frederick had acceded to the supreme power in a highly civilized country, he would have been equally bent

on imposing his own will and forcing the administration into the exact grooves prescribed by himself, and the result would have been as pestilent there as it was beneficial in a backward and semi-barbarous country such as Prussia was in his time. This good internal ordering was no more than a part of the same simple design which shaped his external policy. He had to make a nation, and its material independence in the face of Austria and Russia was not more a part of this process than giving it the great elements of internal well-being, equal laws, just administration, financial thrift, and stimulus and encouragement to industry. Such an achievement as the restoration of the germs of order and prosperity, which Frederick so rapidly brought about after the appalling ruin that seven years of disastrous war had effected, is unmatched in the history of human government. Well might he pride himself, as we know that he did, on replacing this social chaos by order, more than on Rossbach or Leuthen. Above all, he never forgot the truth which every statesman ought to have burning in letters of fire before his eyes; *I am the procurator of the poor.*

It commits us to no general theory of government to recognize the merits of Frederick's internal administration. They constitute a special case, to be judged by its own conditions. We may safely go so far as to say that in whatever degree the social state of a nation calls for active government,

whether, as the people of the American Union boast of themselves, they need no government, or whether, as is the case in Great Britain, the wretched lives of the poor beneath the combined cupidity and heartless want of thought of the rich cry aloud for justice, in this degree it is good that the statesmen called to govern should be in that capacity of Frederick's type, conceding all freedom to thought, but energetic in the use of power as trustees for the whole nation against special classes. To meet completely the demands of their office they should have, what Frederick neither had nor could under the circumstances of his advent and the time be expected to have, a firm conviction that the highest ultimate end of all kingship is to enable nations to dispense with that organ of national life, and to fit them for a spontaneous initiative and free control in the conduct of their own affairs.

Let us be careful to remember that, if Frederick was a great ruler in the positive sense, he sprang from the critical school. The traditions of his house were strictly Protestant, his tutors were Calvinistic refugees, and his personal predilections had from his earliest youth been enthusiastically Voltairean. May we not count it one of the claims of the critical philosophy to a place among the leading progressive influences in western history, that it tended to produce statesmen of this positive type? I do not know of any period of corresponding length that can produce such a group of active, wise, and truly

positive statesmen as existed in Europe between 1760 and 1780. Besides Frederick, we have Turgot in France, Pombal in Portugal, Charles III. and Aranda in Spain. If Charles III. was faithful to the old creed, the three greatest, at any rate, of these extraordinary men drew inspiration from the centre of the critical school. Aranda had mixed much with the Voltairean circle while in Paris. Pombal, in spite of the taint of some cruelty, in so many respects one of the most powerful and resolute ministers that has ever held office in Europe, had been for some time in England, and was a warm admirer of Voltaire, whose works he caused to be translated into Portuguese. The famous school of Italian publicists, whose speculations bore such admirable fruit in the humane legislation of Leopold of Tuscany, and had so large a share in that code with which the name of the ever hateful Bonaparte has become fraudulently associated, these excellent thinkers found their oracles in that practical philosophy, of which we are so unjustly bidden to think only in connection with shallow and reckless destruction. The application of reason to the amelioration of the social condition was the device of the great rulers of this time, and the father and inspirer of this device was that Voltaire who is habitually presented to us a mere mocker.

Psychologues like Sulzer might declare that the scourge of right thinking was to be found in "those philosophers who, more used to sallies of wit than

to deep reasoning, assume that they have overthrown by a single smart trope truths only to be known by combining a multitude of observations, so delicate and difficult that we cannot grasp them without the aid of the firmest attention." How many of these so-called truths were anything but sophistical propositions, the products of intellectual ingenuity run riot, without the smallest bearing either on positive science or social well-being? And is it not rather an abuse of men's willingness to take the profundity of metaphysics on trust, that any one who has formulated a metaphysical proposition, with due technicality of sounding words, has a claim to arrest the serious attention of every busy passer-by, and to throw on this innocent and laudable person the burden of disproof? If Duns Scotus or St. Thomas Aquinas had risen from the dead, Voltaire would very properly have declined a bout of school dialectic with those famous shades, because he was living in the century of the Encyclopædia, when the exploration of things and the improvement of institutions had taken the place of subtle manipulation of unverified words, important as that process had once been in the intellectual development of Europe. He was equally wise in declining to throw more than a trope or sprightly sally in the direction of people who dealt only in the multiplication of metaphysical abracadabras. It was his task to fix the eyes of men upon action. In the sight of Lutheran or Wolfian conjurors with words

this was egregious shallowness. Strangely enough they thought it the climax of philosophic profundity to reconcile their natural spiritualism with the supernatural spiritualism of the Scriptures, and rationalistic theism with the historic theism of revelation. Voltaire repudiated the supernatural and pseudo-historic half of this hybrid combination, and in doing so he showed a far profounder logic than the cloudiest and most sonorous of his theologico-metaphysical critics. We may call him negative and destructive on this account if we please, yet surely the abnegation of barren and inconsistent speculation, and of fruitless effort to seize a vain abstract universality, was a very meritorious trait in a man who did not stop here, but by every means, by poetry, by history, by biography, and by the manifestation of all his vivid personal interests, drew every one who was within the sphere of his attraction to the consideration of social action as the first fact for the firm attention of the leaders of mankind.

It may be said that even from this side Voltaire was destructive only, and undoubtedly, owing to the circumstances of the time, the destructive side seemed to predominate in his social influence. To say this, however, is not to bring an end to the matter. The truth is that no negative thinking can stop at the negative point. To teach men to hate superstition and injustice is a sure, if an indirect, way of teaching them to seek after their opposites. Vol-

taire could only shake obscurantist institutions by appealing to man's love of light, and the love of light, once stirred, leads far. He appealed to reason, and it was reason in Frederick and the others, which had quickened and strengthened the love of good order, that produced the striking reforming spirit which moved through the eighteenth century, until the reaction against French revolutionary violence arrested its progress. It is one of the most difficult questions in all history to determine whether the change from the old order to the new has been damaged or advanced by that most memorable arrest of the work of social renovation in the hands of sovereign and traditional governments, administered by wise statesmen with due regard to traditional spirit; and how far the passionate efforts of those classes, whose only tradition is a tradition of squalor and despair, have driven the possessors of superior material power back into obstructive trepidation. The question is more than difficult, it is in our generation insoluble, because the movement is wholly incomplete. But whether the French outbreak from 1789 to 1794 may prove to have been the starting-point of a new society, or only to have been a detrimental interruption and parent of interruptions to stable movement forwards, we have in either case to admit that there was a most vigorous attempt made in all the chief countries in Europe, between the middle of the century and the fall of the French monarchy, to improve government and to perfect

administration; that Frederick of Prussia was the author of the most permanently successful of these endeavors; and that Frederick learned to break loose from dark usage, to prefer equity of administration, to abandon religious superstition, and to insist on tolerance, from the only effective moral and intellectual masters he ever had, first the French Calvinists, and then the French critical school, with Voltaire for chief. It is true, as we shall presently see, that an important change in the spirit of French writers was marked by the Encyclopædia, which was so much besides being critical. But then this famous work only commenced in the year when Voltaire reached Berlin, and Frederick's character had received its final shape long before that time.

With the exception of Voltaire, d'Alembert was the only really eminent Frenchman whose work ever struck Frederick, and we are even conscious, in comparing his letters to these two eminent men, of a certain seriousness and deferential respect towards the latter friend, which never marked his relations with Voltaire after the early days of youthful enthusiasm. Frederick's admiration for France, indeed, has been somewhat overstated by French writers, and by those of our own country who have taken their word for granted. "Your nation," Frederick once wrote to Voltaire, "is the most inconsequent in all Europe. It abounds in bright intelligence, but has no consistency in its ideas. This is how it appears through all its history. There

is really an indelible character imprinted on it. The only exception in a long succession of reigns is to be found in a few years of Louis XIV. The reign of Henry IV. was neither tranquil enough nor long enough for us to take that into account. During the administration of Richelieu we observe some consistency of design and some nerve in execution; but in truth they are uncommonly short epochs of wisdom in so long a chronicle of madnesses. Again, France has been able to produce men like Descartes or Malebranche, but no Leibnitz, no Lockes, no Newtons. On the other hand, for taste, you surpass all other nations, and I will surely range myself under your standards in all that regards delicacy of discernment and the judicious and scrupulous choice between real beauties and those which are only apparent. That is a great point in polite letters, but it is not everything." Frederick, however, could never endure the least hint that he was not a perfect Frenchman in the order of polite letters. The article on Prussia in the Encyclopædia was full of the most flattering eulogies of his work as a soldier and an administrator, and even contained handsome praise for his writings; but Diderot, the author of this part of the article, delicately suggested that a year or two in the Faubourg St. Honoré would perhaps have dispersed the few grains of Berlin sand which hindered the perfect purity of note of that admirable flute. Frederick, who had hitherto been an ardent

reader of the Encyclopædia, never opened another volume.

We can understand Voltaire's character without wading through the slough of mean scandals which sprang up like gross fungi during his stay at Berlin. Who need remember that Frederick spoke of his illustrious guest as an orange of which, when one has squeezed the juice, one throws away the skin? Or how Voltaire retorted by speaking of his illustrious host, whose royal verses he had to correct, as a man sending his dirty linen to him to wash? Or, still worse, as a compound of Julius Cæsar and the Abbé Cotin? Nor need we examine into stories, suspicious products of Berlin malice, how Frederick stopped his guest's supply of sugar and chocolate, and how Voltaire put his host's candle-ends into his pocket. It is enough to know that the king and the poet gradually lost their illusions, and forgot that life was both too short and too valuable to waste in vain efforts of making believe that an illusion is other than it is. Voltaire took a childish delight in his gold key and his star, and in supping as an intimate with a king who had won five battles. His life was at once free and occupied, the two conditions of happy existence. He worked diligently at his "*Siècle de Louis XIV.*," and diverted himself with operas, comedies, and great entertainments among affable queens, charming princesses, and handsome maids of honor. Yet he could not forget the saying, which had been so faithfully carried to

him, of the orange-skin. He declared that he was like the man who fell from the top of a high tower, and finding himself softly supported in the air, cried out, *Good, if it only lasts.* Or he was like a husband striving hard to persuade himself of the fidelity of a suspected wife. He had fits of violent nostalgia. "I am writing to you by the side of a stove, with drooping head and heavy heart, looking on to the River Spree, because the Spree falls into the Elbe, the Elbe into the sea, and the sea receives the Seine, and our Paris house is near the River Seine, and I say, Why am I in this palace, in this cabinet looking into this Spree, and not in our own chimney-corner? . . . How my happiness is poisoned, how short is life! What wretchedness to seek happiness far from you; and what remorse, if one finds it away from you." This was to Madame Denis, his niece; but a Christmas in the Berlin barrack made even a plain coquette in Paris attractive and homely. We may imagine with what tender regrets he would look back upon the old days at Cirey.

Even in respect of the very mischief from which he had fled, the detraction and caballing of the envious, he was hardly any better off at Berlin than he had been at Paris. D'Argental, one of the wisest of his friends, had forewarned him of this, and that he had fled from enemies whom at any rate he never saw, only to find other enemies with whom he had to live day after day. This was exactly what came to pass. Voltaire often compared the system of life

at Berlin and Potsdam to that of a convent, half military, half literary. The vices of conventual life came with its other features, and among them jealousy, envy, and malice. The tale-bearer, that constant parasite of such societies, had exquisite opportunities, and for a susceptible creature like Voltaire, the result was wholly fatal. The nights and suppers of the gods became, in his own phrase, suppers of Damocles. Alexander the Great was transformed into the tyrant Dionysius. The famous Diatribe of Doctor Akakia, in the autumn of 1752, brought matters to a climax, because its publication was supposed to show marked defiance of the king's wishes.

Maupertuis had been one of the earliest and most strenuous Newtonians in France, and had at his own personal risk helped to corroborate the truth of the new system. In 1735 the zeal for experimental science, which was so remarkable a trait in this century of many-sided intellectual activity, induced the academy of sciences to despatch an expedition to take the actual measure of a degree of meridian below the equator, and the curious and indefatigable La Condamine, one of the most ardent men of that ardent time, with two other inquirers went to Peru. In 1736 Maupertuis and Clairaut under the same auspices started for the north pole, where, after undergoing the severest hardships, they succeeded in measuring their degree, and verifying by observation Newton's demonstration of the oblate figure of the earth, a verification that was further

completed by La Caille's voyage to the Cape of Good Hope in 1750. Maupertuis commemorated his share in this excellent work by having a portrait of himself executed, in which the palm of a hand gently flattens the north pole. He was extremely courageous and extremely vain. His costume was eccentric and affected, his temper more jealous and arbitrary than comports with the magnanimity of philosophers, and his manner more gloomily solemn than the conditions of human life can ever justify. With all his absurdities, he was a man of real abilities, and of a solidity of character beyond that of any of his countrymen at Frederick's court. I would rather live with him, Frederick wrote to the Princess Wilhelmina, than with Voltaire; "his character is surer," which in itself was saying little. But then, the moment he came into collision with Voltaire, his absurdities became the most important thing about him, because it was precisely these which Voltaire was sure to drag into unsparing prominence. In old days they had been good friends, and a letter still remains, mournfully testifying to the shallowness of men's sight into the roots of their relations with others, for it closes by bidding Maupertuis be sure that Voltaire will love him all the days of his life. The causes of their collision were obvious enough. As Frederick said, of two Frenchmen in the same court, one must perish. Maupertuis, from the heights of the exact sciences, probably despised Voltaire as a scribbler, while Voltaire, with a heart flowing over

with gay vivacity, assuredly counted Maupertuis arbitrary, ridiculously solemn, and something of an impostor. The compliances of society, he said of the president of the Berlin academy, are not problems that he is fond of solving. Maupertuis acted to König, in the matter of an academic or discoverer's quarrel, in a way that struck Voltaire, and all men since, as tyrannical, unjust, and childish, all in one. He unhappily wrote a book which gave Voltaire such an excuse for punishing the author's injustice to König, as even Voltaire's spleen could hardly have hoped for, and the result was the wittiest and most pitiless of all the purely personal satires in the world. The temptation was certainly irresistible.

Maupertuis, as has been said, was courageous and venturesome, and this venturesomeness being uncorrected by the severe discipline of a large body of accurate positive knowledge, such as Clairaut and Lagrange possessed, led him into some worse than equivocal speculation. He was in the depths of the metaphysical stage, and developed physical theories out of abstract terms. Of some of these theories the worst that could be said was that they were wholly unproved. He advanced the hypothesis, for instance, that all the animal species sprang from some first creature, prototype of all creatures since. Others of his theories were right in idea, but wrong in form, and without even an attempt at verification. The famous principle of the minimum of action, for

example, in spite of the truth at the bottom of it, was valueless and confused, until Lagrange connected it with fundamental dynamic principles, generalized it, and cleared the unsupported metaphysical notions out of it. All this, however, was wise and Newtonic compared with the ideas promulgated in the Philosophic Letters, on which the wicked Akakia so swiftly pounced. Here were notions which it needed more audacity to broach, than to face the frosts and snows of Lapland; strange theories that in a certain state of exaltation of the soul one may foresee the future; that if the expiration of vital force could only be prevented, the body might be kept alive for hundreds of years; that by careful dissection of the brains of giants, Patagonian and other, we should ascertain something of the composition of the mind; that a Latin town if it were established, and this was not an original idea, would be an excellent means of teaching the Latin language. Voltaire knew exactly what kind of malicious gravity and feigned respect would surround this amazing performance and its author with inextinguishable laughter, and his thousand turns and tropes cut deep into Maupertuis like sharpened swords.

Voltaire was not by scientific training competent to criticise Maupertuis. This is true; but then Voltaire had what in such cases dispensed with special competence, a preternatural gift of detecting an impostor, and we must add that here as in every

other case his anger was set aflame not by intellectual vapidity, but by what he counted gross wrong. Maupertuis had acted with despotic injustice towards König, and Voltaire resolved to punish him. This is perhaps the only side of that world-famous and truly wretched fray which it is worth our while to remember, besides its illustration of the general moral that active interest in public affairs is the only sure safeguard against the inhuman egotism, otherwise so nearly inevitable and in any wise so revolting, of men of letters and men of science.

Frederick took the side of the president of his academy, and had Doctor Akakia publicly burnt within earshot of its author's quarters.[1] Voltaire had long been preparing for the end by depositing his funds in the hands of the Duke of Würtemberg, and by other steps, which had come to the king's ears, and had by no means smoothed matters. He sees now that the orange has been squeezed, and that it is his business to think of saving the skin. He drew up for his own instruction, he said, a pocket-dictionary of terms in use with kings: *My friend* means *my slave; my dear friend* means that *you are more than indifferent to me;* understand by *I will make you happy, I will endure you as long as*

[1] It may be worth mentioning that there actually existed in the sixteenth century a French physician, who changed his real name of Sans-Malice into Akakia, and left descendants so called. See M. Jal's *"Dictionnaire Critique de Biographie et d'Histoire,* p. 19 (1869).

I have need of you; sup with me to-night means *I will make fun of you to-night.* Voltaire, though he had been, and always was, the most graceful of courtiers, kept to his point, and loudly gave Frederick to understand that in literary disputes he recognized no kings. An act of tyranny had been committed towards König, who was his friend, and nothing would induce him to admit either that it was anything else, or that it was other than just to have held up the tyrant to the laughter of Europe.

Frederick was profoundly irritated, and the terms in which he writes of his French Virgil as an ape who ought to be flogged for his tricks, a man worse than many who have been broken on the wheel, a creature who may deserve a statue for his poetry but who certainly deserves chains for his conduct, seem to imply a quite special mortification and resentment. He had no doubt a deep and haughty contempt for all these angers of celestial minds. The cabals of men of letters, he wrote to Voltaire, seemed to him the lowest depths of degradation. And he would fain have flung a handful of dust on the furious creatures. After three months of vain effort to achieve the impossible, Voltaire being only moderately compliant, the king in March, 1753, gave him leave to depart, though with a sort of nominal understanding for politeness' sake that there was to be a speedy return.

Voltaire, however, was not a man in whose breast the flame of resentment ever flickered away in polite-

ness, until his adversary had humbled himself. Though no one ever so systematically convinced himself each day for thirty years that he was on the very point of death, no one was less careful to measure the things that were worth doing from the point of view of a conventional *memento mori.* Nobody spoke about dying so much, nor thought about it so little. The first use he made of his liberty was to shoot yet another bolt at Maupertuis from Leipsic, more piercing than any that had gone before. Frederick now in his turn abandoned the forms of politeness, and the renowned episode of Frankfort took place. Voltaire, on reaching Frankfort, was required by the Prussian resident in the free city to surrender his court decorations, and, more important than these, a certain volume of royal verse containing the "*Palladium,*" a poem of indecencies which were probably worse than those of the "*Pucelle,*" because an indecent German is usually worse than an indecent Frenchman. The poems, however, were what was far worse than indecent in Frederick's eyes; they were impolitic, for they contained bitter sarcasm on sovereigns whom he might be glad to have, and one of whom he did actually have, on his side in the day of approaching storm. Various delays and unlucky mishaps occurred, and Voltaire underwent a kind of imprisonment for some five weeks (May 31 to July 7, 1753), under extremely mortifying and humiliating circumstances. There was on the one part an honest, punctual, methodic,

rather dull Prussian subordinate, anxious above all other things in the world, not excepting respect for genius and respect for law, to obey the injunctions of his master from Berlin. On the other part Voltaire, whom we know; excitable as a demon, burning with fury against his enemies who were out of his reach now that he had spent all his ammunition of satire upon them, only half understanding what was said to him in a strange tongue, mad with fear lest Frederick meant to detain him after all. It would need the singer of the battle of the frogs and mice to do justice to this five-weeks' tragi-comedy. A bookseller with whom he had had feuds years before, injudiciously came either to pay his respects, or to demand some trivial arrears of money; the furious poet and philosopher rushed up to his visitor and inflicted a stinging box on the ear, while Collini, his Italian secretary, hastily offered this intrepid consolation to Van Duren, "Sir, you have received a box on the ear from one of the greatest men in the world." A clerk came to settle this affair or that, and Voltaire rushed towards him with click of pistol, the friendly Collini again interfering to better purpose by striking up the hand that had written "*Mérope*" and was on the point of despatching a clerk. We need not go into the minute circumstances of the Frankfort outrage. Freytag, the subordinate, clearly overstrained his instructions, and his excess of zeal in detaining and harassing Voltaire can only be laid indirectly to Frederick's charge. But Frederick is

responsible, as every principal is, who launches an agent in a lawless and tyrannic course. The German Varnhagen has undoubtedly shown that Voltaire's account, witty and diverting as it is, is not free from many misrepresentations, and some tolerably deliberate lies. French writers have as undoubtedly shown that the detention of a French citizen by a Prussian agent in a free town of the empire was a distinct and outrageous illegality. We, who are fortunately not committed by the exigencies of patriotism to close our eyes to either half of the facts, may with facile impartiality admit both halves. Voltaire, though fundamentally a man of exceptional truth, was by no means incapable of an untruth when his imagination was hot, and Frederick was by no means incapable of an outrage upon law, when law stood between him and his purpose. Frederick's subordinates had no right to detain Voltaire at all, and they had no right to allow themselves to be provoked by his impatience into the infliction of even small outrages upon him and his obnoxious niece. On the other hand, if Voltaire had been a sort of Benjamin Franklin, if he had possessed a well-regulated mind, a cool and gentle temper, a nice sense of the expedient, then the most grotesque scene of a life in which there was too much of grotesque would not have been acted as it was, to the supreme delight of those miserable souls who love to contemplate the follies of the wise.

Any reader who takes the trouble to read the

documents affecting this preposterous brawl at Frankfort between a thoroughly subordinate German and the most insubordinate Frenchman that ever lived,— this adventure, as its victim called it, of Cimbrians and Sicambrians,— will be rather struck by the extreme care with which Frederick impresses on the persons concerned the propriety of having Voltaire's written and signed word for such parts of the transaction as needed official commemoration. In one place he expressly insists that a given memorandum should be written by Voltaire's own hand from top to bottom. This precaution, which seems so strange in a king who had won five battles, dealing with the author of a score of tragedies, an epic, and many other fine things, sprang in truth from no desire to cast a wanton slight on Voltaire's honor, but from the painful knowledge that the author of the fine things was not above tampering with papers and denying patent superscriptions. Voltaire's visit had not been of long duration, before the unfortunate lawsuit with Abraham Hirschel occurred. Of this transaction we need only say this much, that Voltaire employed the Jew in some illegal jobbing in Saxon securities; that he gave him bills on a Paris banker, holding diamonds from the Jew as pledge of honest Christian dealing; that his suspicions were aroused, that he protested his bills, then agreed to buy the jewels, then quarrelled over the price, and finally plunged into a suit, of which the issues were practically two, whether Hirschel had any rights on

one of the Paris bills, and whether the jewels were fairly charged. Voltaire got his bill back, and the jewels were to be duly valued; but the proceedings disclosed two facts of considerable seriousness for all who should have dealings with him; first, that he had interpolated matter to his own advantage in a document already signed by his adversary, thus making the Jew to have signed what he had signed not; and second, that when very hard pushed he would not swerve from a false oath, any more than his great enemy the apostle Peter had done. Frederick had remembered all this, just as every negotiator who had to deal with Frederick remembered that the great king was not above such infamies as Klein-Schnellendorf, nor such meanness as filching away with his foot a letter that had slipped unseen from an ambassador's pocket.

And so there was an end, if not of correspondence, yet of that friendship, which after all had always belonged rather to the spoken order than to the deep unspeakable. There was now cynical, hoarse-voiced contempt on the one side, and fierce, reverberating, shrill fury on the other. The spectacle and the sound are distressing to those who crave dignity and admission of the serious in the relations of men with one another, as well as some sense of the myriad indefinable relations which encompass us unawares, giving color and perspective to our more definable bonds. One would rather that even in their estrangement there had been some grace and firm-

ness and self-control, and that at least the long-cherished illusion had faded away worthily, as when one bids farewell to a friend whom a perverse will carries from us over unknown seas until a far day, and we know not if we shall see his face any more. It jars on us that the moon which has climbed into the night and moved like sound of music over heath and woodland, should finally set in a gray swamp amid the harsh croaking of amphibians. But the intimacy between Frederick and Voltaire had perhaps been always most like the theatre moon.

We may know what strange admixture of distrust, contempt, and tormenting reminiscence, mingled with the admiration of these two men for one another's genius, from the bitterness which occasionally springs up in the midst of their most graceful and amiable letters of a later date. For instance, this is Voltaire to Frederick: "You have already done me ill enough; you put me wrong for ever with the king of France; you made me lose my offices and pensions; you used me shamefully at Frankfort, me and an innocent woman who was dragged through the mud and down into jail; and now, while honoring me with letters, you mar the sweetness of this consolation by bitter reproaches. . . . The greatest harm that your works have done, is in the excuse they have given to the enemies of philosophy throughout Europe to say, 'These philosophers cannot live in peace, and they cannot live together. Here is a king who

does not believe in Jesus Christ; he invites to his court a man who does not believe in Jesus Christ, and he uses him ill; there is no humanity in these pretended philosophers, and God punishes them by means of one another.' . . . Your admirable and solid wisdom is spoiled by the unfortunate pleasure you have always had in seeing the humiliation of other men, and in saying and writing stinging things to them; a pleasure most unworthy of you, and all the more so as you are raised above them by your rank and by your unique talents." To which the king answers that he is fully aware how many faults he has, and what great faults they are, that he does not treat himself very gently, and that in dealing with himself he pardons nothing. As for Voltaire's conduct, it would not have been endured by any other philosopher. "If you had not had to do with a man madly enamored of your fine genius, you would not have got off so well with anybody else. Consider all that as done with, and never let me hear again of that wearisome niece, who has not so much merit as her uncle, with which to cover her defects. People talk of the servant of Molière, but nobody will ever speak of the niece of Voltaire."

The poet had talked, after his usual manner, of being old and worn out, and tottering on the brink of the grave. "Why, you are only sixty-two," said Frederick, "and your soul is full of that fire which animates and sustains the body. You will bury me and half the present generation. You will have the

delight of making a spiteful couplet on my tomb." Voltaire did not make a couplet, but he wrote a prose lampoon on the king's private life, which is one of the bitterest libels that malice ever prompted, and from which the greater part of Europe has been content to borrow its idea of the character of Frederick. This was vengeance enough even for Voltaire. We may add that while Voltaire constantly declared that he could never forget the outrages which the king of Prussia had inflicted on him, neither did he forget to draw his pension from the king of Prussia even in times when Frederick was most urgently pressed. It may be said that he was ready to return favors; "If things go on as they are going now," he wrote with sportive malice, "I reckon on having to allow a pension to the king of Prussia."

It was not surprising that Voltaire did not return to Paris. His correspondence during his residence at Berlin attests in every page of it how bitterly he resented the cabals of ignoble men of letters, and the insolence of ignoble men of authority. "If I had been in Paris this Lent," he wrote in 1752, "I should have been hissed in town, and made sport of at court, and the *Siècle de Louis XIV.* would have been denounced, as smacking of heresy, as audacious, and full of ill significance. I should have had to go to defend myself in the anteroom of the lieutenant of police. The officers would say, as they saw me pass, *There is a man who belongs to us.* . . . No,

my friend, *qui bene latuit, bene vixit.*" With most just anger, he contrasted German liberality with the tyrannical suspicion of his own government. The emperor, he says, made no difficulty in permitting the publication of a book in which Leopold was called a coward. Holland gave free circulation to statements that the Dutch are ingrates and that their trade is perishing. He was allowed to print under the eyes of the king of Prussia that the Great Elector abased himself uselessly before Louis XIV., and resisted him as uselessly. It was only in France where permission was refused for a eulogy of Louis XIV. and of France, and that, because he had been neither base enough nor foolish enough to disfigure his eulogy either by shameful silences or cowardly misrepresentations. The imprisonment, nine years before this, of Lenglet Dufresnoy, an old man of seventy, for no worse offence than publishing a supplement to de Thou's history, had made a deep impression on Voltaire. He would have been something lower than human if he had forgotten the treatment which he had himself received at the hands of the most feeble and incompetent government that ever was endured by a civilized people.

So he found his way to Geneva, then and until 1798 an independent republic or municipality. There (1755) he made himself two hermitages, one for summer, called the Délices, a short distance from the spot where the Arve falls into the Rhone, and the other near Lausanne (Monrion) for winter. Here,

he says, " I see from my bed this glorious lake, which bathes a hundred gardens at the foot of my terrace; which forms on right and left a stream of a dozen leagues, and a calm sea in front of my windows; and which waters the fields of Savoy, crowned with the Alps in the distance." " You write to me," replied d'Alembert, " from your bed, whence you command ten leagues of the lake, and I answer you from my hole, whence I command a patch of sky three ells long." To poor d'Alembert the name of the famous lake was fraught with evil associations, for he had just published his too veracious article on Geneva in the Encyclopædia, in which he paid the clergy of that city the unwelcome compliment, that they were the most logical of all Protestants, for they were Socinians; and he was now suffering the penalty of men who stir up angry hives.

The enjoyment which Voltaire had then and for twenty years to come in his noble landscape, and which he so often commemorates in his letters, is a proof that may be added to others, of the injustice of the common idea that the Voltairean school of the eighteenth century were specially insensible to the picturesque. Morellet, for instance, records his delight and wonder at the Alps and the descent into Italy, in terms quite as warm as, if much less profuse than, those of the most impressible modern tourist. Diderot had a strong spontaneous feeling for nature, as he shows not only in his truly remarkable criticisms on the paintings of twenty years, but also in

his most private correspondence, where he demonstrates in terms too plain, simple, and homely, to be suspected of insincerity, the meditative delight with which the solitary contemplation of fine landscape inspired him. He has no peculiar felicity in describing natural features in words, or in reproducing the inner harmonies with which the soft lines of distant hills, or the richness of deep embosoming woodlands, or the swift procession of clouds driven by fierce or cheerful winds, compose and strengthen the sympathizing spirit. But he was as susceptible to them as men of more sonorous word. And Voltaire finds the liveliest pleasure in the natural sights and objects around him, though they never quickened in him those brooding moods of egotistic introspection and deep-questioning contemplation in which Jean Jacques, Bernardin de St. Pierre, and Senancour, found a sort of refuge from their own desperate impotency of will and of material activity. Voltaire never felt this impotency. As the very apostle of action, how should he have felt it? It pleased him in the first few months of his settlement in new scenes, and at other times, to borrow some of Frederick's talk about the bestial folly of the human race, and the absurdity of troubling oneself about it; but what was a sincere cynicism in the king, was in Voltaire only a bit of cant, the passing affectation of an hour. The dramatist whose imagination had produced so long a series of dramas of situation, the historian who had been attracted by such labors as

those of Charles XII. of Sweden and Peter the Great of Russia, as well as by the achievements of the illustrious men who adorned the age of Louis XIV., proved himself of far too objective and positive a temperament to be capable of that self-conscious despair of action, that paralyzing lack of confidence in will, which drove men of other humor and other experience forlorn into the hermit's caves of a new Thebaid. Voltaire's ostentatious enjoyment of his landscape and his garden was only the expansion of a seafarer, who after a stormful voyage finds himself in a fair haven. His lines to Liberty give us the key-note to his mood at this time. He did not suppose that he had got all, but he knew that he had got somewhat.

Je ne vante point d'avoir en cet asile
Rencontré le parfait bonheur:
Il n'est point retiré dans le fond d'un bocage;
Il est encore moins chez les rois;
Il n'est pas même chez le sage;
De cette courte vie il n'est point le partage;
Il y faut renoncer; mais on peut quelquefois
Embrasser au moins son image.

"'Tis a fine thing, is tranquillity," he wrote; "yes, but ennui is of its acquaintance and belongs to the family. To repulse this ugly relation, I have set up a theatre." Besides the theatre, guests were frequent and multitudinous. He speaks of sometimes having a crowd of fifty persons at table. Besides Les Délices and Lausanne, he purchased from the President de Brosses a life-interest in Tourney, and in the

same year (1758) he bought the lordship of Ferney, close by. He was thus a citizen of Geneva, of Berne, and of France, "for philosophers ought to have two or three holes underground against the hounds who chase them." If the dogs of France should hunt him, he could take shelter in Geneva. If the dogs of Geneva began to bay, he could run into France. By and by this consideration of safety grew less absorbing, and all was abandoned except Ferney; a name that will always remain associated with those vigorous and terrible assaults upon the Infamous, which first definitely opened when Voltaire became the lord of this little domain.

CHAPTER V.

WAR AGAINST INTOLERANCE.

I.

In examining the Voltairean attack upon religion we have to remember that it was in the first instance prompted, and throughout its course stimulated and embittered, by antipathy to the external organization of the religion. It was not merely disbelief in a creed, but exasperation against a church. Two distinct elements lay at the bottom of Voltaire's enmity to the peculiar form of monotheism which he found supreme around him. One of them was the intellectual element of repugnance to a system of belief that rested on miracles and mysteries irreconcilable with reason, and was so intimately associated with some of the most odious types of character and most atrocious actions in the Old Testament, which undoubtedly contains so many of both. The other was the moral element of anger against the expounders of this system, their intolerance of light and hatred of knowledge, their fierce yet profoundly contemptible struggles with one another, the scandals

of their casuistry, their besotted cruelty. Of these two elements, the second was, no doubt, if not the earlier in time, at least the stronger in intensity. It was because he perceived the fruit to be so deadly, that Voltaire laid the axe to the root of the tree. It is easy to say that these poisonous Jesuitries and black Jansenisms were no fruit of the tree, but the produce of a mere graft, which could have been lopped off without touching the sacred trunk. Voltaire thought otherwise, and whether he was right or wrong, it is only just to him to keep constantly before us the egregious failure of Catholicism in his day as a social force. This is a fact as to which there can be no dispute among persons with knowledge enough and mental freedom enough to be competent to have an opinion, and Voltairism can only be fairly weighed if we regard it as being in the first instance no outbreak of reckless speculative intelligence, but a righteous social protest against a system socially pestilent. It was the revival of the worst parts of this system in the cruelty and obscurantism which broke out after the middle of the century, that converted Voltaire into an active assailant of belief. But for that he would pretty certainly have remained tranquilly in the phase of deism of which some of his early verses are the expression. Philosophy is truly, as Callicles says in the Gorgias, a most charming accomplishment for a man to follow at the right age, but to carry philosophy too far is the undoing of humanity.

Voltaire no doubt deliberately set himself to overthrow the Catholic theology, as well as the ecclesiastical system which was bound up with it, and he did so for the very sufficient reason that it has always been impossible for men to become indulgent in act, while they remained fanatical in belief. They will not cease to be persecutors, he said, until they have ceased to be absurd.[1] The object was to secure tolerance, and tolerance could only be expected as the product of indifference, and indifference could be spread most surely by throwing the fullest light of reason and common sense on the mystical foundations of revealed religion. To stop short at the inculcation of charity and indulgence was to surrender the cause; for how should the mere homilies of a secular moralist soften those whom the direct injunctions of a deity and his inspired apostles, their own acknowledged masters, failed to make charitable? It was essential that the superstitions in which intolerance had its root should be proved detestable and ridiculous. When men had learned to laugh at superstition, then they would perceive how abominable is the oppressive fanaticism which is its champion.

It is hardly possible to deny the service which Protestantism rendered in preventing the revolution from Catholicism to scientific modes of thought from being that violent, abrupt, and irreconcilable breach, which we now observe in France and Italy, when we

[1] Corr. *Œuv.* lxxxv, p. 249.

remember that the cause of toleration was systematically defended in England by men who as systematically defended the cause of Christianity. The Liberty of Prophesying, in which the expediency of tolerance was based on the difficulty of being sure that we are right, was written by one of the most devout and orthodox divines; while the famous Letters on Toleration (1689), in which the truly remarkable step is taken of confining the functions of civil government to men's civil interests and the things of this world, were the work of the same Locke who vindicated the Reasonableness of Christianity.[1] The English Deists pressed home in a very effectual way the deduction of universal freedom of speech from the first maxims of Protestantism, and their inference was practically admitted.[2] Hence there was no inseparable association between adherence to the old religious ideas and the prohibition of free speech in spirituals, and on the other hand there was no obligation on the part of those who claimed free speech to attack a church which did not refuse their claim.

[1] It was to the last-named book, one may suppose, that Voltaire referred, when he asked how it was that Locke, after having so profoundly traced the development of the human understanding, could so degrade his own understanding in another work. (Dict. Phil. s. v. Platon. *Œuv.* lvii, p. 369.)

[2] See Collins's Apology for Free Debate and Liberty of Writing, prefixed to the "Grounds and Reasons of Christianity."

In France the strictly repressive policy of the church in the eighteenth century, sometimes bloody and cruel as in the persecution of the Protestants, sometimes minutely vexatious as in the persecution of the men of letters, but always stubborn and lynx-eyed, had the natural effect of making it a point of honor with most of those who valued liberty to hurl themselves upon the religious system, of which rigorous intolerance was so prominent a characteristic. The Protestant dilution of the theological spirit seems thus to be in the long run a more effective preparation for decisive abandonment of it than its virulent dissolution in the biting acids of Voltairism, because within limits the slower these great transformations are in accomplishing themselves, the better it is for many of the most precious and most tender parts of human character. Our present contention is that the attitude of the religionists left no alternative. It is best that creeds, like men who have done the work of the day, should die the slow deaths of nature, yet it is counted lawful to raise an armed hand upon the brigand who seeks the life of another.

Voltaire to the end of his course contended that the church only was to blame for the storm which overtook her teaching in the later years, when his own courageous attack had inspired a host of others, less brilliant but not any less embittered, to throw themselves on the reeling enemy. The cause of the inundation of Europe by the literature of negativism and repudiation was to be sought first of all in the

fierce theological disputes which revolted the best of the laity. Of this violent revulsion of feeling Voltaire himself was the great organ. He furnished its justification, and nourished its fire, and invested it with a splendid lustre. Even when with the timidity of extreme age he seemed to deprecate the growing ferocity of the attack, he still taunted the clerical party with their own folly in allowing a mean and egotistic virulence to override every consideration of true wisdom and policy. "Now," he wrote in 1768, "a revolution has been accomplished in the human mind, that nothing again can ever arrest. They would have prevented this revolution, if they had been sage and moderate. The quarrels of Jansenists and Molinists have done more harm to the Christian religion than could have been done by four emperors like Julian one after another."

It cannot be too often repeated that the Christianity which Voltaire assailed was not that of the Sermon on the Mount, for there was not a man then alive more keenly sensible than he was of the generous humanity which is there enjoined with a force that so strangely touches the heart, nor one who was on the whole, in spite of constitutional infirmities and words which were far worse than his deeds, more ardent and persevering in its practice. Still less was he the enemy of a form of Christian profession which now fascinates many fine and subtle minds, and which starting from the assumption that there are certain inborn cravings in the human heart,

constant, profound, and inextinguishable, discerns in the long religious tradition an adequate proof that the mystic faith in the incarnation, and in the spiritual facts which pour like rays from that awful centre, are the highest satisfaction which a divine will has as yet been pleased to establish for all these yearnings of the race of men. This graceful development of belief, emancipated from dogma and reducing so many substantial bodies to pale shades, so many articles once held as solid realities to the strange tenuity of dreams, was not the Christianity of Voltaire's time, any more than it was that of the Holy Office. There was nothing resembling the present popularity of a treatment which gives generals so immense a preponderance over particulars—somewhat to the neglect of the old saying about the snare that lies hidden in generals, many persons being tolerably indifferent about the *dolus* so long as they can make sure of the *latet*. He attacked a definite theology, not a theosophy. We may, indeed, imagine the kind of questions which he would have asked of one pressing such a doctrine on his acceptance; how he would have sought the grounds for calling aspirations universal, which the numerical majority of the human race appear to have been without, and the grounds for making subjective yearnings the test and the measure of the truth of definite objective records; how he would have prayed to be instructed of these cravings, whether they spring up spontaneously, or are the products of

spiritual self-indulgence, and also of the precise manner in which they come to be satisfied and soothed by the momentary appearance of a humane figure far off upon the earth; how he would have paused to consider the intelligibility of so overwhelming a wonder as the incarnation having been wrought, for the benefit of so infinitesimally small a fragment of mankind. We can imagine this and much else, but Voltaire would never have stirred a finger to attack a mysticism which is not aggressive, and can hardly be other than negatively hurtful.

If any one had maintained against Voltaire that the aspirations after a future life, the longing for some token that the Deity watches over his creatures and is moved by a tender solicitude for them, and the other spiritual desires alleged to be instinctive in men, constitute as trustworthy and firm a guide to truth as the logical reason, we may be sure that he would have forgiven what he must have considered an enervating abnegation of intelligence, for the sake of the humane, if not very actively improving, course of life to which this kind of pietism is wont to lead. He might possibly have entertained a little contempt for them, but it would have been quiet contempt and unspoken. There is no case of Voltaire mocking at any set of men who lived good lives. He did not mock the English Quakers. He doubtless attacked many of the beliefs which good men hold sacred, but if good men take up their abode under the same roof which shelters the children of darkness and wrong,

it is not the fault of Voltaire if they are hit by the smooth stones shot from his sling against their unworthy comrades. The object of his assault was that amalgam of metaphysical subtleties, degrading legends, false miracles, and narrow depraving conceptions of divine government which made the starting-point and vantage-ground of those ecclesiastical oppressors, whom he habitually and justly designated the enemies of the human race. The evil and the good, the old purity and the superadded corruptions, were all so inextricably bound up in the Catholicism of the eighteenth century, that it was impossible to deal a blow to the one without risk of harm to the other. The method was desperate, but then the enemy was a true Chimæra, a monster sodden in black corruption, with whom in the breast of a humane man there could be no terms.

The popes during the Voltairean period were above the average in virtue and intelligence, but their power was entirely overshadowed by that wonderful order that had assumed all effective spiritual supremacy for something like two centuries. Nor was this order the only retrogressive influence. The eighteenth century was the century not only of the Sacré Cœur, but of the miracles of the dead Abbé Paris, transactions in which Jansenist emulated Jesuit in dragging men and women into the deepest slough of superstition. A Roman augur fresh from the inspection of the sacrificial entrails would have had a right to despise the priests who invented an

object for the adoration of men in the diseased and hideous visions of Marie Alacoque. The man who sells rain to savages may also be held to add to the self-respect of the race, if you contrast him with the convulsionnaires and the fanatics who were transported by their revolting performances.

France is the country where reactions are most rapid and most violent. Nowhere else can the reformer count so surely on seeing the completion of his reform followed so instantly by the triumph of its adversaries. The expulsion of the Jesuits, under circumstances of marked and uncompromising harshness, was not consummated, before the tide of religious bigotry flowed in from the opposite shore, and swelled to a portentous height. The exultation of the philosophers at the coming fall of their old foes was instantly checked by the yet worse things which befell them and their principles at the hands of new enemies. The reign of the Jansenists was speedily pronounced more hateful than the reign of the Jesuits. Various accommodations were possible with heaven, so long as the Jesuits had credit, but the Jansenists were pitiless.

The parliament or supreme judicial tribunal of Paris was Jansenist, mainly out of political hatred of the Jesuits, partly from a hostility, very easily explained, to every manifestation of ultramontane feeling and influence, partly from a professional jealousy of the clergy, but partly also because the austere predestinarian dogma, and the metaphysical

theology which brought it into supreme prominence, seem often to have had an unexplained affinity for serious minds trained in legal ideas and their application. The Jesuits had systematically abstained as far as possible from purely speculative theology. Suarez is pronounced one of the greatest writers in speculative ethics and jurisprudence; but in the technical metaphysics of theology the Jesuits with all their literary industry did not greatly care to exercise themselves. Their task was social and practical, and as confessors, directors, preachers, and instructors, they had naturally paid less attention to abstract thought than to the arts of eloquence, address, and pliancy. Then, too, in doctrine they had uniformly clung to the softer, more amiable, more worldly, less repulsive, interpretation of the eternally embarrassing claims of grace, election, free-will. The Augustinian, Calvinistic, or Jansenist view of the impotence of will and the saving importance of grace is the answer of souls eager to feel immediate individual contact with a Supreme Being. The Jesuits and their power represented extremely different sentiments, fundamentally religious, but still fundamentally social also, the desire of men for sympathetic and considerate guidance in conduct, and their craving for such a unity of the external ordering of the faith as should leave them undistracted to live their lives. The former concentrated feelings upon the relations of men directly and immediately with a Supreme Being;

the latter upon their relations with this Being only mediately, through their relations with one another, and with the church to which a measure of divinity had been attributed. Hence the decline of the Jesuits assumed the form of a depravation of morals, while the Jansenists held more and more tightly to a narrow and bigoted correctness of belief. The parliament was willing to resist a Molinist archbishop and his satellites, when they refused burial to all who should die without having received a certificate of conformity to the famous bull Unigenitus, which proscribed Jansenist opinion. But none the less for this was it bent on suppressing the common enemy, who despised the bull and the Five propositions, Molina and Jansenius, Archbishop Beaumont and Quesnel, all equally. Voltaire's natural sagacity made him alive to the fact, which perhaps remains as true now as then, that the professional and middle classes are a worse enemy of liberal opinion and are more intolerant than the remnants of the old aristocratic orders. He says to d'Alembert, "You are right in declaring yourself the enemy of the great and their flatterers; still, the great protect one upon occasion, they despise the Infamous, and they will not persecute philosophers; but as for your pedants of Paris, who have bought their office, as for those insolent bourgeois, half fanatics, half imbecile, they can do nothing but mischief." He had not learnt to look away from both classes, professional and aristocratic alike, to that third estate where the voice

of the reformer has always found the first response. Still what he said was true as against the lawyers, whose vision perhaps never extends beyond the improvement of that mere surface of order with which their profession is concerned. The Parliament of Paris was the eager ally of the bigots of the court in 1757, in fulminating deadly edicts against the Encyclopædia and all concerned in its production or circulation. In 1762, the year of the publication of "*Émile*" and the "*Contrat Social,*" not all the influence of Rousseau's powerful protectors could prevent the launching of a decree of arrest against him. Bloodier measures were not wanting.

In 1762 Morellet had published under the title of a Manual for Inquisitors a selection of the most cruel and revolting portions of the procedure of the Holy Office, drawn from the "*Directorium Inquisitorium*" of Eymeric, a grand inquisitor of the fourteenth century. The cold-blooded cruelties of the regulations, which were thus brought into the light of the eighteenth century, created the most profound sensation among the rapidly increasing adherents of tolerance and humanity. Voltaire was intensely stirred by this resuscitation of horrors that he mistook for dead. It made the same impression upon him, he said, as the bleeding body of Cæsar made upon the men of Rome. But he soon found that it was an error to impute a special cruelty to the spiritual power. Malesherbes, in giving Morellet the requisite permission to print his "Manual," had

amazed his friend by telling him, that though he might suppose he was giving to the world a collection of extraordinary facts and unheard-of processes, yet in truth the jurisprudence of Eymeric and his inquisition was as nearly as possible identical with the criminal jurisprudence of France at that very moment. This was very soon to be proved.

The bigots, infuriated by the blows which were destroying the Jesuits, hunted out against heretical enemies some forgotten portions of this terrible jurisprudence. A Protestant pastor, Rochette, was hanged for exercising his functions in Languedoc. The Catholics on the occasion of the arrest of Rochette were summoned by sound of tocsin, and three young Protestants, who were brothers, fearing massacre in the midst of the agitation, took up their arms: for this offence they were convicted of rebellion, and had their heads struck off. It became painfully clear how great a mistake it was to suppose the clergy touched with some special curse of cruelty. Then, as usually, for good or for evil, they were on about the same moral level with an immense number of laymen, and were not much more than the incarnation of the average darkness of the hour. If Eymeric's procedure only copied the ordinary criminal jurisprudence, the bigotry of the ecclesiastics was accurately reflected in the bigotry of the secular tribunals. The Protestant Calas was broken on the wheel (1762), because his son had been found dead, and some one

chose to say that the father had killed him, to prevent him from turning Catholic. There was not the smallest fragment of evidence, direct or indirect, for a single link in the chain of circumstances on which the unfortunate man's guilt depended; while there were many facts which made the theory of his guilt the most improbable that could have been brought forward. The widow and the children of Calas were put to the torture, and eventually fled to Geneva to take refuge with Voltaire. During the same year the same tribunal, the Parliament of Toulouse, did its best to repeat this atrocity in the case of Sirven. Sirven was a Protestant, and his daughter had been with perfect legality snatched away from him, and shut up in a convent, there to be better instructed in the faith. She ran away, and was found at the bottom of a well. Sirven was accused of murdering his daughter, and he only escaped the wheel by prompt flight. His wife perished of misery amid the snows of the Cévennes, and he joined the wretched family of Calas at Geneva, where the same generous man furnished shelter and protection.

In the north of France the fire of intolerance burnt at least as hotly as in the south. At Abbeville a crucifix was found to have been mutilated in the night. Two lads of eighteen, to one of whom Frederick gave shelter in Prussia, were accused under cover of the sacrilege, and La Barre was condemned by the tribunal of Amiens, at the instance of the bishop, to have tongue and right hand cut off,

and then be burnt alive; a sentence that was presently commuted by the Parliament of Paris to decapitation (1766). There was no proof whatever that either of the two youths was in any way concerned in the outrage. The bishop of the diocese had issued monitory proclamations, and conducted a solemn procession to the insulted crucifix. The imagination of the town was kindled, and the sacrilege became the universal talk of a people growing more and more excited. Rumor ran that a new sect was being formed, which was for breaking all the crucifixes, which threw the host on the ground and cut it with knives. There were women who declared that they had seen these things. All the horrible stories were revived which had been believed against the Jews in the middle ages. A citizen took advantage of this fierce agitation to gratify a private grudge against a relative of La Barre. He set inquiries on foot among the lowest persons for proof that the youth had been concerned in the original crime. By one means or another he got together material enough to support an indictment. Proceedings once begun, a crowd of informers rose up. It was deposed that La Barre and d'Etallonde had passed within thirty yards of the sacred procession without removing their hats, that La Barre had spoken irreverently of the Virgin Mary, that he had been heard to sing unseemly songs and recite ribald litanies. This testimony, given with a vagueness that ought to have proved it legally valueless, was the fruit of

the episcopal monitory, which as at Toulouse in the case of Calas, virtually incited the dregs of the people to bring accusations against their superiors, and menaced a man with the pains of hell if he should refuse to put his neighbor in peril of his life. The tribunal, as excited as the witnesses and the rest of the public, relied on a royal ordinance of 1682, directed against sacrilege and superstition, and designed to put down sorcery. In the sentence inflicting so bloody a punishment, the offence was described as consisting in singing abominable songs against the Virgin Mary. To exact such a penalty for such a delinquency was to make human life a mere plaything for the ignorant passion of the populace and the intellectual confusion of the tribunals.

These atrocities kindled in Voltaire a blaze of anger and pity, that remains among the things of which humanity has most reason to be proud. Everybody who has read much of the French writing of the middle of the eighteenth century is conscious from time to time of a sound of mocking and sardonic laughter in it. This laugh of the eighteenth century has been too often misunderstood as the expression of a cynical hardness of heart, proving the hollowness of the humanitarian pretensions in the midst of which it is heard. It was in truth something very different; it was the form in which men sought a little relief from the monotony of the abominations which oppressed them, and from whose taint they had such difficulty to escape. This refrain,

that after all a man can do nothing better than laugh, apparently so shallow and inhuman, in reality so penetrated with melancholy, we may count most certainly on finding at the close of the narration of some more than usually iniquitous or imbecile exploit of those in authority. It was when the thought of the political and social and intellectual degradation of their country became too vivid to be endured, that men like Voltaire and d'Alembert would abruptly turn away from it, and in the bitterness of their impotence cry that there was nothing for it but to take the world and all that befalls therein in merriment. It was the grimacing of a man who jests when he is perishing of hunger, or is shrinking under knife or cautery. Thus d'Alembert having given Voltaire an account of the execution of the unfortunate La Barre, in words that show how intensely his own narrative was afflicting him, suddenly concludes by saying that he will add no more on this auto-da-fé, so honorable to the French nation, for it made him ill-humored, and he meant only to mock at whatever might happen. But Voltaire could not rest thus. The thought of so hateful a crime, perpetrated by a tribunal of justice, clothed him in the shirt of Nessus. All aflame, he wrote to d'Alembert with noble impetuosity:

" This is no longer a time for jesting: witty things do not go well with massacres. What? These Busirises in wigs destroy in the midst of horrible tortures children of sixteen! And that in face of

the verdict of ten upright and humane judges! And the victim suffers it! People talk about it for a moment, and the next they are hastening to the comic opera; and barbarity, become the more insolent for our silence, will to-morrow cut throats juridically at pleasure. Here Calas broken on the wheel, there Sirven condemned to be hanged, further off a gag thrust into the mouth of a lieutenant-general, a fortnight after that five youths condemned to the flames for extravagances that deserved nothing worse than Saint Lazare. Is this the country of philosophy and pleasure? It is the country rather of the Saint Bartholomew massacre. Why, the Inquisition would not have ventured to do what these Jansenist judges have done." When he had received d'Alembert's letter, ending as we have seen, his remonstrance waxed vehement: "What, you would be content to laugh? We ought rather to resolve to seek vengeance, or at any rate to leave a country where day after day such horrors are committed. . . . No, once more, I cannot bear that you should finish your letter by saying, I mean to laugh. Ah, my friend, is it a time for laughing? Did men laugh when they saw Phalaris' bull being made red-hot?"

This revival in the tribunals of Paris and the provincial towns alike, of the ignorant fanaticism and the unscientific jurisprudence of the most unenlightened times, was the more bitter and insupportable from the new light which shone around such horrors. Beccaria's treatise "On Offences and Penalties" had

just been translated into French by Morellet, and furnished a strange commentary upon the atrocities of Toulouse and Abbeville. It seemed, men said, as if at every striking vindication of the rights of humanity the genius of cruelty broke its chains, and, to prove the futility of all such vindications, inspired new acts of barbarism and violence. The philosophic group had yielded to a premature exultation, and in their inexperience supposed that they who planted the tree should see the gathering-in of the fruit. The reign of reason was believed to be close at hand, and this belief made the visible recrudescence of fanatical unreason signally unsupportable. It is a high honor to Voltaire and his disciples that the trial did not prove too strong for their faith, and that when they saw how far too sanguine they had been, they were more astonished than they were discouraged, and their energy redoubled with the demands made upon it. The meaner partisans of an orthodoxy which can only make wholly sure of itself by injustice to adversaries, have always loved to paint the Voltairean school in the character of demons, enjoying their work of destruction with a sportive and impish delight. They may have rejoiced in their strength so long as they cherished the illusion that those who first kindled the torch should also complete the long course and bear the lamp to the goal. When the gravity of the enterprise showed itself before them, they remained alert with all courage, but they ceased to fancy that courage necessarily makes men happy.

The mantle of philosophy was rent in a hundred places, and bitter winds entered at a hundred holes, but they only drew it the more closely around them. At the very last Voltaire seems to have seen something of the vast space which every ray of light has to traverse before it reaches the eye of the common understanding. "I now perceive," he wrote the year before his death, "that we must still wait three or four hundred years. One day it cannot but be that good men win their cause; but before that glorious day arrives how many disgusts have we to undergo, how many dark persecutions, without reckoning the La Barres, of whom from time to time they will make an auto-da-fé." To speak thus was to recognize the true character of the revolution, and the many elements which go to the transformation of an old society. To speak thus, too, was to mark the true character of the sincere lover of human progress, the soul of steadfast patience and strong hope, mingled with many a pang for the far-off and slow-coming good.

It was a natural thing to identify the Jesuits with the strongest part of the old society, because their organization was both the strongest and most striking of its external supports. Their suppression, though not to be dispensed with except on the condition of an ultimate overthrow of morality and an extinction of intellectual light, had one effect which the statesmen of the time could hardly be expected to see, and which has not been enough

considered. Just as the papacy by the fourteenth century had become more and more exclusively a temporal power, so the Jesuits by the middle of the eighteenth had become more and more a commercial power. They were a powerful trading corporation, and it was as merchants, rather than as casuists and directors of conscience, that they finally came into collision with secular authority in France, Portugal, and Spain. Now since the revival of the order it has been exclusively engaged in the contest for spiritual supremacy, and for as much of temporal power as has seemed essential to its security. This, however, is only one of the evils which counterbalance the advantages of every progressive measure; for, alas, when the statesman believes most confidently that he has advanced by a league, a very few years show him or others that his league was after all no more than an ell or two.

The reactionary outburst of fanaticism for which the humiliation of the Jesuits was a signal, only showed how well founded the Voltairean allegations as to the depraving effects of the existing system of religion had really been. It was the verification of all that Voltaire ever said against the system, and demonstrated both the virulence and the tenacity of the influences which Catholicism in the days of its degradation had exerted over the character of the nation. It was most illogical to expect a people who had been bred in the Catholic tradition suddenly to welcome its enemies. If Catholicism had trained

men up to the temper which seeks the light and loves it, how should it have deserved animosity? Nearly all lovers of improvement are apt in the heat of a generous enthusiasm to forget that if all the world were ready to embrace their cause, their improvement could hardly be needed. It is one of the hardest conditions of things that the more numerous and resolute the enemies of reform, then the more unmistakably urgent the necessity for it. It was just because the cruelty, persecution, and darkness, in the last ten years of the reign of Louis XV. were things possible, that the onslaught upon Catholicism was justifiable and praiseworthy. They showed the depth and strength of the forces of the old society, and they foreshadowed the violence which marked its dissolution. If people had remembered in 1789 how few years separated them from the wide-spread fanaticism which darkened the last days of Voltaire, they might have calculated better how few years separated them from the Napoleonic Concordat.

No permanent transformation of a society, we may be sure, can ever take place until a transformation has been accomplished in the spiritual basis of thought. Voltaire may have distinctly seen this and formulated it to himself, or not; in any case, he steered his own course exactly as he would have done if he had seen it. As M. Guizot expresses it, the separation between the spiritual and temporal orders was never real in Europe except in the eight-

eenth century, when for the first time the spiritual order developed itself entirely apart from the temporal order. Thus Voltaire acquiesced without murmur or reproach in the conditions of political absolutism, and the disgrace and ruin which the nullity of the government brought upon his country in the Seven Years' War, keenly as he felt it, yet provoked no thought of temporal changes. His correspondence in that fatal time is marked by a startling apathy about public events, and even Rossbach seems not to move him to seek its causes. If we compare his joyful enthusiasm at the accession of Turgot to power in 1774, we can have no doubt that this strange numbness of feeling was only the silence of a wise man despairing of saying or seeing anything useful, and not the criminal folly of a bad citizen to whom the welfare of his country is not dear. The disasters of France were as serious to him as to any one else, as may be plainly seen under the assumed philosophy with which his vivacious spirit loved to veil real feeling; but the impossibility of doing anything, even of taking a part in the process with which we English are so familiar as the forming of public opinion, drove him for consolation to the field where he was certain of doing efficient work. Writing in 1761, a year of crushing national loss, he says to one of the oldest and most intimate of his correspondents: "There is nothing to laugh at in all this. I am struck to the heart. Our only resource is in the promptest and most

humiliating peace. I always fancy, when some overwhelming disaster arrives, that the French will be serious for six weeks. I have not yet been able to disabuse myself of this notion." Voltaire was penetrated by the spirit of action, and he perceived and regretted that the organization of France did not permit of the effective action of private individuals in the field of politics. There are lines in the "*Henriade*" extolling the freedom of England, and he sometimes indulges in the commonplaces of a literary republicanism; but turning to the portion of his works which his editors have classified as political, we scarcely find much beyond the documents, and they are important and interesting enough, still not truly political, that relate to the various affairs of Calas, La Barre, and others, in which he exposed the atrocities of the tribunals. So far as they come into the region of politics at all, it is only to assail the overt and direct injustice done to society by the institutions, privileges, and pretensions of the Church. He constantly attacks in a great variety of forms the material mischief inflicted on society by the vast numbers of monks, mendicant or other; their unproductive lives, the burden of their maintenance weighing upon more industrious subjects, the restriction of population occasioned by their celibacy. The direct refusal of the clergy in 1750 to consent to pay their share of the taxes like other citizens, though owning as much as a fifth of all the property in the realm, moved him to insist in a vigorous pamphlet

that the distinction in a kingdom between spiritual and temporal powers is a relic of barbarism; that it is monstrous to permit a body of men to say, Let those pay who work, we ought not to pay because we are idle; that superstition inevitably tends to make bad citizens, and therefore princes ought to protect philosophy which destroys superstition.

Voltaire's task, however, was never directly political, but spiritual, to shake the foundations of that religious system which professed to be founded on the revelation of Christ. Was he not right? If we find ourselves walking amid a generation of cruel and unjust and darkened spirits, we may be assured that it is their beliefs on what they deem highest that have made them so. There is no counting with certainty on the justice of men who are capable of fashioning and worshipping an unjust divinity, nor on their humanity so long as they incorporate inhuman motives in their most sacred dogma, nor on their reasonableness which they rigorously decline to accept reason as a test of truth.

It is necessary to admit from the point of view of impartial criticism, that Voltaire had one defect of character, of extreme importance in a leader of this memorable and direct attack. With all his enthusiasm for things noble and lofty, generous and compassionate, he missed the peculiar emotion of holiness, the soul and life alike of the words of Christ and Saint Paul, that indefinable secret of the long hold of mystic superstition over so many high

natures, otherwise entirely prepared for the brightness of the rational day. From this impalpable essence which magically surrounds us with the mysterious and subtile atmosphere of the unseen, changing distances and proportions, adding new faculties of sight and purpose, extinguishing the flames of disorderly passion in a flood of truly divine aspiration, we have to confess that the virtue went out in the presence of Voltaire. "To admire Voltaire," cried a man who detested him, "is the sign of a corrupt heart, and if anybody is drawn to his works, then be very sure that God does not love such a one." The truth of which that is so vehement a paraphrase amounts to this, that Voltaire has said no word, nor even shown an indirect appreciation of any word said by another, which stirs or expands the emotional susceptibility, indefinite exultation, and far-swelling inner harmony, which de Maistre and others have known as the love of God, and for which a better name, as covering most varieties of form and manifestation, is holiness, deepest of all the words that defy definition. Through the affronts which his reason received from certain pretensions both in the writers and in some of those whose actions they commemorated, this sublime trait in the Bible, in both portions of it, was unhappily lost to Voltaire. He had no ear for the finer vibrations of the spiritual voice.

This had no concern in the fact that he hated and despised, and was eager that others should hate and

despise, the religious forms that ruled France in his day. The Christianity which he assailed was as little touched as Voltairism itself with that spirit of holiness which poured itself around the lives and words of the two founders, the great master and the great apostle. The more deeply imbued a man was with this spirit, the more ardently would he crave the demolition of that Infamous in belief and in practice, which poisoned the stream of holiness in its springs, and shed pestilence along its banks, and choked its issues in barrenness and corruption.

The point where the failure of this quality in Voltaire was especially a source of weakness to his attack, is to be found in the crippling of his historic imagination, and the inability which this inflicted upon him of conceiving the true meaning and lowest roots of the Catholic legend. The middle age between himself and the polytheism of the empire was a parched desert to him and to all his school, just as to the Protestant the interval between the apostles and Luther is a long night of unclean things. He saw only a besotted people led in chains by a crafty priesthood; he heard only the unending repetition of records that were fictitious, and dogmas that drew a curtain of darkness over the understanding. Men spoke to him of the mild beams of Christian charity, and where they pointed he saw only the yellow glare of the stake; they talked of the gentle solace of Christian faith, and he heard only the shrieks of the thousands and tens of

thousands whom faithful Christian persecutors had racked, strangled, gibbeted, burned, broken on the wheel. Through the steam of innocent blood which Christians for the honor of their belief had spilled in every quarter of the known world, the blood of Jews, Moors, Indians, and all the vast holocausts of heretical sects and people in eastern and western Europe, he saw only dismal tracts of intellectual darkness, and heard only the humming of the doctors, as they served forth to congregations of poor men hungering for spiritual sustenance the draff of theological superstition.

This vehement and blinding antipathy arose partly from the intense force with which the existing aspect of Catholicism recalled all that was worst, and shut out all that was best in its former history. One cannot fairly expect the man who is in the grip of a decrepit tyrant, to do absolutely full justice to the seemly deeds and gracious promises of his tormenter's youth. But partly also this blindness arose from the fact that Voltaire measured the achievements of Catholicism by the magnitude of its pretensions. He took its supernatural claims seriously, and his intelligence was exasperated beyond control by the amazing disproportion and incongruity between these claims and the most conspicuous of the actual results. Those who have parted company with a religion, as Voltaire had parted company with Christianity, can only be counted upon to award the well-earned praise to its better part, after they

have planted themselves stably on the assumption that the given religion is a human and natural force like another.

The just, historic calm on which our modern prides himself, is only possible in proportion to the mature completeness with which he takes for granted, and believes that those to whom he speaks will take for granted, the absence of supernatural intervention in the processes of religious action and development. He is absolutely undisturbed by the thought of that claim, which was omnipotent until Voltaire came to do deadly battle with it, of Christianity to be a crowning miracle of divine favor, which should raise men to be only a little lower than the angels, and should be the instrument for pouring out upon them an ever-flowing stream of special and extraordinary grace. It is not until the idea has dropped out of our minds of the great fathers of the Church as saints, that we are free to perceive what services they rendered as statesmen, and it is only when men have ceased to dispute whether Christianity was a revelation, that they have eyes to see what services it has rendered as a system. But in Voltaire's time, if Catholicism was justified historically, it was believed dogmatically, and therefore was to be attacked dogmatically also. The surrender of the written legend has never hindered its champions from taking ground which implied some esoteric revelation, that proves to be some special interpretation of the written legend. So long as

the thinker is busy disproving the position that a man who happens to live on a certain part of the globe is a being of such singular and exceptional consequence in the universe as to be held worthy by supreme heavenly powers of receiving a miraculous message and the promise of this and that unspeakable privilege in indescribable worlds to come, so long he is not likely to weigh very fairly the effects of the belief in such power, messages, and privileges, on the education and advancement of this world. The modern historic justice which is done to Catholicism is due to the establishment of a series of convictions that civilization is a structure which man by his own right arm has raised for himself, that it has been exposed to many an era of storm and stress, and to manifold influences which have been perpetually destroying portions of the great edifice, adding fresh parts, modifying the old, by an interminable succession of changes, resounding and volcanic, or still and imperceptible; that the danger of destruction was never so terrible as in the days of the dissolution of the old Roman society; that in this prolonged crisis the Christian Church emerged, first by its organization and the ability of some of its chiefs, and next by the attraction of legends that harmonized with the needs of a dark, confused, and terror-stricken time; that the many barbarous and absurd articles of belief incorporated in the Christian profession by the sophists of the East, received from time to time humane modification in the hands

of the wiser churchmen of the West, whose practical judgment was perpetually softening down the crude, savage, unilluminated doctrines which had naturally sprung up in the dismal age when the Catholic system acquired substance and shape. A just recognition of all these things is only easy to one whose expectations from humanity are moderate, who perceives how tardy and difficult is the accomplishment of each smallest step in the long process, and how helpful are even the simplest beliefs of rude times in transforming men from vagrant animals into beings with a consciousness of fixed common relations towards some object of common worship, and so planting the first germs of social consolidation and growth.

Voltaire was, from the circumstances in which he was placed, too busy proving the purely human origin of Catholicism to have a mind free to examine how much, if we suppose it to be of purely human origin, it has done for those who accepted it. Perhaps we ought rather to praise than blame him for abstaining from planting himself at the historic point of view, before settling the previous question whether the historic point of view is permitted in considering the religious movements of Europe. Until Voltaire and others had divested the current religion of its supernatural pretensions, it was impossible for any thinker, who declines to try to take the second step before he has already taken the first, to survey the operations of such a religion as

a merely secular force. This surely is a field of thought where no serious inquirer could content himself with a mere working hypothesis. If the supernatural claims of Catholicism are well founded, then the historic method of treating it is either a frivolous diversion or else a grave and mischievous heresy. The issue being of this moment, everybody who studies the philosophy of history with effect must have made up his mind in one way or the other. Voltaire had made up his mind very definitely, and the conclusion to which, for adequate or inadequate reasons, he came in this matter was one of the most influential agencies in preparing men's minds for the construction and general reception of a sounder historical philosophy than was within his own reach. That he did not see the deduction from his work is a limitation of vision that he shares with most of the men to whom it has fallen to overthrow old systems, and clear the ground on which the next generation has raised new.

II.

Having said thus much on the general causes and conditions of Voltaire's attack, we may next briefly examine his method. A brief examination suffices, because, like all his contemporaries, he was so very imperfectly acquainted with the principles of scientific criticism, and because his weapons, though sharp and deadly enough for their purpose, are now likely to become more and more thoroughly

antiquated. In criticism he was, as has often been remarked, the direct descendant of Bayle. That is, his instruments were purely literary and dialectical. He examined the various sacred narratives as if he had been reviewing a contemporary historian. He delights in the minute cavils of literary Pyrrhonism, and rejoices in the artifice of imposing the significance of the letter, where his adversaries strove for interpretation of the spirit. As if, for instance, anything could be more childish than to attack baptism by asking whether Christianity consists in throwing water on the head, with a little salt in it. He is perfectly content with the exposure of a fallacy in words, without seeking to expose the root fallacy of idea. Nothing short of the blindest partisanship can pretend to find in this a proper or adequate method. The utmost that can be said, and no just historian ought to forget to say it, is that it was not more improper nor inadequate than the orthodox method of defence. Bayle's commentary on the words, " Compel them to come in," would not satisfy the modern requirements of scriptural exegesis, but it was quite good enough to confound those who contended that the text was a direct warrant and injunction from heaven for the bitterest persecution on earth. But the unfair parry of unfair thrust, extenuate it as we may, count it inevitable as we may, even reckoning up such advantages from it as we can, and in the present case they were enormous, can never be any pattern or masterpiece of retort; and it

is folly to allow admiration for the social merit of Voltaire's end to blind us to the logical demerit of his means. It is deliberately to throw away the advantage of our distance from the contest, and to sell for a momentary self-indulgence in the spirit of party the birthright of a free and equitable historic vision. Let men not fail to do justice to the gains of humanity won by the emancipation of the eighteenth century; but we shall be worse off than if they had never been transmitted, if they are allowed to bind us to approve of every detail of the many movements by which the final triumph was obtained.

The key to his method of attack is given us in a sentence in one of his letters to d'Alembert. "It is never by means of metaphysics," he says, "that you will succeed in delivering men from error; you must prove the truth by facts." In other words, the sublime abstract reasoning of a Spinoza will do far less to dispel the narrow ideas, unfounded beliefs, and false restrictive conceptions which cripple the human intelligence so long as it is in bondage to a theological system, than a direct disproval of the alleged facts on which the system professes to rest. It is only by dealing immediately with these that you can make the repulse of error a real question, substantially interesting to ordinary men. Always remembering that Voltaire's intelligence was practical rather than speculative, and, besides this, that from the time when he commenced his attack in earnest the object which he had at heart was the

overthrow of a crushing practical institution, we may agree that in such a humor and with such a purpose the most effective way of harassing so active and pestilent a foe was to carry the war into the enemy's quarters, and to use those kinds of arguments which the greatest number of men would be likely to find cogent. We may complain that Voltaire never rises from the ground into the region of the higher facts of religion; and this is quite true. It would have been controversially futile if he had done so. There was no audience in those times for the discussion of the higher facts; and the reason of this was that the spiritual instructors and champions themselves thrust into the front place legends, miracles, and the whole of the peculiarly vulgar part of the theological apparatus, which it would have been as absurd to controvert metaphysically, as it would be to try to elevate a Gold-coast negro from his fetish worship by the transcendental parts of Plato.

It nearly always happens that the defenders of a decaying system, when they find themselves surrounded by the wholly uncongenial atmosphere of rationalistic method, fall back, not on the noblest, but on the ignoblest parts of their system. Distressed by the light, they shrink hurriedly into darkest recesses of the familiar caves, partly because they have a sense of especial security in a region that they know so well, and partly because they have misgivings lest the surrender of articles or practices

in which they only half believe, should by too stringent process of logical compulsion lead to the destruction of others in which they believe with all their hearts. Such tactics may or may not be politic, but we can at least be quite certain that they tend neither to elevation of religion, nor discovery of truth, nor profit and sincerity of discussion. If a set of doctrines be attacked from many quarters in an unworthy manner, and taken at their worst instead of at their best, we may be quite sure that this is as much due to the defenders as to the assailants. It was not Voltaire's fault that the controversy turned on issues which a more modern opponent would not care to dispute. He is constantly flippant and trivial, and constantly manifests gross irreverence, but it was the writers whom he was combating, writers like Sanchez of the Stercorists, who had opened frivolous and unbecoming questions that could hardly be exposed with gravity. He was making war on an institution, and it was not his concern to fight on ground which his adversary had never thought, and was too blind and demoralized to be able to think, of taking up. It was not his fault that the upholders of the creed he attacked made a stand upon the letter of sacred documents, upon prophecy and miracle and special intervention, upon the virtues of relics and the liquefaction of the blood of Saint Januarius. The same wise man who forbade us to answer a fool according to his folly, also enjoined upon us to answer a fool according to his folly, and the moral

commentator agrees that each prescription is as sage as its contradictory.

If truth means anything it was worth while to put to rout the distortions of truth with which the Church lowered the understanding of its votaries. If truth means anything, then it was worth while to reply to the allegation that the history of the Christian Church is a long witness of the goodness of heaven and the ever-present guidance of its heavenly founder, by a record of the actual facts; of the simplicity, equality, absence of multiplied rites, orders, and dogmas, among the primitive members of the congregation, and of the radical differences between the use of apostolic times and of times since; of the incurable want of authority for all those tales of demons being cast out, pious inscriptions in letters of gold found graven on the hearts of martyrs, and the rest, which grow rare in proportion as we draw nearer to the times when the evidence for them would have been preserved; of the infamous character of many Christian heroes, from Constantine downwards, and of the promptitude with which the Christians, as soon as ever they had power, dyed their hands in the blood of their persecutors; of the stupefying circumstances that after a revelation was made to the human race by no less a prodigy than the incarnation of supreme power in a mortal body, and the miraculous maintenance of this event and its significance in the tradition, doctrine, and discipline of the Catholic church, yet the whole of Asia, the

whole of Africa, all the possessions of the English and Dutch in America, all the uncivilized Indian tribes, all the southern lands, amounting to one-fifth part of the globe, still remain in the clutches of the demon, to verify that holy saying of many being called but few chosen.

It may be said that this kind of argument really proves nothing at all about the supernatural origin or character of the Christian revelation, for which you must seek the responses not of ecclesiastical history but of the human heart. And that may be a fair thing to say, but then this contention of the new revelation being only a message to the heart has only been heard since Voltaire thrust aside the very different contention of his day. Those various beliefs were universally accepted about the progress of the Church, which were true in no sense whatever, literal or spiritual, mystical or historical. People accepted traditions and records, sacred and profane, as literal, accurate, categorical declarations and descriptions of a long series of things done and suffered. Moreover, the modern argument in favor of the supernatural origin of the Christian religion, drawn from its suitableness to our needs and its divine response to our aspirations, must be admitted by every candid person resorting to it to be of exactly equal force in the mouth of a Mahometan or a fire-worshipper or an astrolater. If you apply a subjective test of this kind, it must be as good for the sincere and satisfied votaries of one creed, as it is for those of

IMPERIAL PALACE AT POTSDAM

any other. The needs and aspirations of the Mahometan would not be satisfied by fetishism or polytheism, nor those of the developed polytheist by totem worship. It would be ridiculous for so small a minority of the race as the professors of Christianity to assume that their aspirations are the absolute measure of those of humanity in every stage. The argument can never carry us beyond the relativity of religious truth.

Now the French apologist a hundred years ago dealt in the most absolute possible matter. Christianity to him meant a set of very concrete ideas of all sorts; any one who accepted them in the concrete and literal form prescribed by the Church would share infinite bliss, and any one who rejected them, whether deliberately or from never having been so happy as to hear of them, would be infinitely tormented. If this theory be right, then Voltaire must naturally be abhorred by all persons who hold it, as a perverse and mischievous hinderer of light. If it be wrong, and we must observe that from its terms this is not one of the marvellously multiplying beliefs of which we hear that they may be half wrong and half right, then Voltaire may take rank with other useful expellers of popular error. Everybody must admit how imperfect is all such treatment of popular error; how little rich, how little comprehensive, how little full. Yet the surgeon who has couched his patient's cataract has surely done a service, even if he do not straightway carry

him to enjoy the restored faculty on some high summit of far and noble prospect.

Voltaire's attack was essentially the attack of the English deists, as indeed he is always willing enough to admit, pursued with far less gravity and honest search for truth, but, it is hardly necessary to say, with far more adroitness, rapidity, and grace of manner than any of them, even than Bolingbroke. As we have seen, he insisted on throwing himself upon the facts in the records that are least easily reconciled with a general sense of probability and evidence, as gradually developed in men by experience. He placed the various incidents of the Bible, the interpretation of them by the Church, the statement of doctrine, the characters of prominent actors, in the full light of common experience and of the maxims which experience has made second nature. "I always speak humanly," he says mockingly, "I always put myself in the place of a man who, having never heard tell either of Jews or Christians, should read these books for the first time, and not being illuminated by grace, should be so unhappy as to trust unaided reason in the matter, until he should be enlightened from on high."

It is superfluous to detail the treatment to which he subjected such mysteries of the faith as the inheritance of the curse of sin by all following generations from the first fall of man; the appearance from time to time, among an obscure oriental tribe, of prophets who foretold the coming of a divine

deliverer, who should wash away that fatal stain by sacrificial expiation; the choice of this specially cruel, treacherous, stubborn and rebellious tribe, to be the favored people of a deity of spotless mercy and truth; the advent of the deliverer in circumstances of extraordinary meanness and obscurity among a generation that greeted his pretensions with incredulity, and finally caused him to be put to death with ignominy, in spite of his appeal to the prophets and to the many signs and wonders which he wrought among them; the rising of this deliverer from the dead, the ascription to him in the course of the next three or four centuries of claims which he never made in person, and of propositions which he never advanced while he walked on the earth, yet which must now be accepted by every one who would after death escape a pitiless torment without end; the truly miraculous preservation amid a fiery swarm of heresies, intricate, minute, subtle, barely intelligible, but very soul-destroying, of that little fragile thread of pure belief which can alone guide each spirit in the divinely appointed path. Exposed to the light, which they were never meant to endure, of ordinary principles of evidence founded on ordinary experience, the immortal legends, the prophecies, the miracles, the mysteries, on which the spiritual faith of Europe had hung for so many generations, seemed to shrivel up in unlovely dissolution. The authenticity of the texts on which the salvation of man depends, the contradictions and

inconsistencies of the documents, the incompatibility between many acts and motives expressly approved by the holiest persons, and the justice and mercy which are supposed to sit enthroned on high in their bosoms, the forced constructions of prophecies and their stultifying futility of fulfilment, the extraordinary frivolousness of some of the occasions on which the divine power of thaumaturgy was deliberately and solemnly exerted,— these were among the points at which the messenger of Satan at Ferney was permitted sorely to buffet the Church. What is the date of the Apostles' Creed? What of the so-called Athanasian Creed? How were the seven sacraments instituted one after another? What was the difference between the synaxis and the mass? And so forth through many hundreds of pages.

Along with rationalistic questions in scriptural and ecclesiastical history, are many more as to doctrine, and the assumption on which doctrine rests; questions as to the Trinity, as to redemption by the shedding of innocent blood, as to the daily miracle of transubstantiation, as to the resurrection of the body, as to the existence of an entity called soul independently of that matter which, apart from miracle, seems an inseparable condition of its manifestation. His arguments on all these subjects contain a strange mixture of shallow mockery and just objection. The questions which he suggests for the doctors as to the resurrection of the body may serve for an example. Among them are these:

"A Breton soldier goes to Canada. It happens by a not uncommon chance that he falls short of food; he is forced to eat a piece of an Iroquois whom he has killed over night. The Iroquois had fed on Jesuits for two or three months, a great part of his body had thus become Jesuit. So there is the body of the soldier with Iroquois, Jesuit, and whatever he had eaten before, entering into it. How then will each resume exactly what belongs to him?" "In order to come to life again, to be the same person you were, you must have a lively and present recollection; it is memory that makes your identity. Having lost memory, how are you to be the same man?" Again, "considering that only certain material elements are proper for the composition of the human body, where is earth enough to be found to remake all the bodies needed for so many hundreds of generations? And supposing that by a prodigious miracle the whole human race could be resuscitated in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, where are all the spirits meanwhile?"

Another very favorite mode of approaching the beliefs, incidents, and personages of Jewish and Christian history was to show that they had counterparts in some pagan fables or systems, in the books of Chinese philosophers or Brahminical sages. The inference from this identity or correspondence between some Judaical practices and myths, and the practices and myths of Arabians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Hindoos, was that they were in all cases equally the

artificial creations of impostors preying on the credulity of men, "the first prophet or diviner having been the first rogue who met the first fool." It is curious to observe how the modern argument from constantly extending discoveries in comparative mythology tends to the demolition of the special pretensions of Judaical myths of all sorts, by the very opposite inference to that on which the Voltairean school rested. Voltaire urged that as these myths resembled one another in this and that important feature, therefore they were all equally spurious, false, and absurd. The modern, on the contrary, would hold them all equally genuine, equally free from the taint of imposture in priest or people, and equally faithful representations of the mental states which produced and accepted them. The weakening of the particular sanctity and objective reality of any one form of these common primitive ways of thinking about the action of non-human agents would be just as strong, whether we take the new or the old view of the generation of myths, but the difference of the effect of the two views upon the justice and fertility of historic spirit is immeasurable. There is no sign, however, that Voltaire was ever seriously conscious of the importance of a right consideration of the mental conditions of primitive peoples. This study had been commenced in his own time by de Brosses, the inventor of the term fetishism, and pronounced by competent modern authorities to have been a powerful and original thinker

upon the facts of the infancy of civilization. Yet Voltaire treated the speculations of this industrious inquirer with the same ignorant contempt and scorn that the theological enemies of geology were once accustomed to bestow on men who chipped bits of rock and cherished fossils. Oddly enough, Voltaire's carelessness and want of thought on these matters left him with that very theory of the nature of the development of cultivation, on which the theological school insists to this day as against the scientific ethnologists. The question is whether the earliest men were savages, or partially civilized; in other words, whether civilization has consisted in a certain uniform progression from a state a little above the brutes, or whether the savage is not a being who has degenerated from a partial degree of civilization. The progression theory was no doubt in a general way a characteristic doctrine of the men of the eighteenth century, for which de Maistre, an ardent and most ingenious advocate of the degeneration theory, reviled them with his usual heartiness. Yet his eagerness to depress revelation by exalting natural theology led Voltaire to the essentially theological position that the earliest men had a clear and lofty idea of a Supreme Being, and a ready appreciation of justice and charity in their relations with one another, until the vile ambition of priestly and prophetic impostors succeeded in setting upon their necks the yoke of systems which cor-

rupted the heart and conscience, and sophisticated a pure and simple faith.

He did not hold that men were conscious of the one God as they were conscious of light, or that they had perceptions of such a being, as they had perceptions of the ground they tilled. The idea was derived by process of natural logic from the contemplation of astonishing natural effects, of harvest and dearth, of fair days and tempests, of benefactions and scourges. They saw all these things and felt the work of a master. Just as in each community there were men who by the force of their reason found out that triangles with the same base and of the same height are equal, and others who in sowing and reaping and tending their flocks perceived that the sun and moon returned pretty nearly to the point from which they had started, and that they never travelled beyond a certain limit to north or south, so there was a third man who considered that men, animals, stars could not have made themselves, and who saw that therefore a Supreme Being must exist; while a fourth, struck by the wrongs that men inflicted on one another, concluded that if there exists a being who made the stars, the earth and men, such a being must confer favor on the virtuous, and punishments on the wicked. This idea, Voltaire declares, is so natural and so good that it was most readily embraced. The various forms of revelations were only so many corruptions of that simple, serviceable, and self-proving monotheism,

and so were the conceptions of polytheism. He had no notion that monotheism is a later development of the theological spirit than polytheism. Unable to deny that the Greeks and the Romans, about whom he knew so little and talked so much, had plurality of gods, he drew a distinction between one Supreme Being and all the rest, and contended that you may search all their records in vain for a single fact or a single word to counterbalance the many passages and monuments which attest their belief of the sovereignty of the one deity and his superiority over all the rest. We do not know whether this was a fortuitous kind of growth in his own mind, or whether it was a scrap of recollection from the painstaking pages in which Cudworth had worked at the establishment of that explanation of polytheism. Voltaire too often writes on these weighty subjects, as if trusting to a memory that snatched effectively at plausible theories, while losing much of their evidence and all their deeper bearings.

It would be not a little extraordinary, if we did not constantly remember that Voltaire's strength did not lie in speculation or systematic thought, that he saw none of the objections to this account of things, and that he was content with so limited an observation of the facts. If de Brosses had magnanimously suffered himself to be cheated in the transaction of the fourteen cords of wood, Voltaire would perhaps have read his book candidly, and if he had read it otherwise than with a foregone resolution to despise

it, he would have come upon a number of circumstances entirely fatal to his smooth theory that many gods are always subordinate to the one, because he would have had to consider those states of the human mind in which there are no spiritual gods at all, but in which every object whatever is invested with volition and power. In one place he shows something like a recognition of the true nature of the process. "I have always been persuaded," he says in a letter to Mairan, "that the phenomena of the heavens have been in the main the source of the old fables. Thunder was heard on the inaccessible summit of a mountain; therefore there must be gods dwelling on the mountain, and launching the thunder. The sun seems to speed from east to west, therefore he has fine coursers. The rain does not touch the head of one who sees a rainbow, so the rainbow is a token that there will never again be a deluge." But then Voltaire was no systematic thinker, and thus there was no security that any given right idea which came into his mind would either remain present to him, or would be followed up and placed along with other ideas in a scientific order. Apart from this, however, it is extraordinary that Voltaire's extreme acuteness did not suggest to him the question, how it was that the artless and clear belief in one God became more and more obscured by the growing multitude of other gods, just in proportion as the primitive tribes became more civilized in all the arts of life. If the nomad pro-

genitors of the Greeks had only one god, how was it that, as knowledge, social feeling, love of beauty, and all the other ennobling parts of man became more fully developed, the power of superstition waxed greater, and temples and images were multiplied?

Again, the theologist might, consistently with his deliberate principle of resort to the miraculous, contend that this first conception of a single supreme power, in the fact of the existence of which he is entirely at one with Voltaire, was directly implanted by a supernatural force. But Voltaire, debarred from such an explanation as this, was driven silently to assume and imply the truly incredible position that the rudest savages, being what we know them, urgently occupied in the struggle for means of subsistence, leading lives purely animal, possessed of no vocabulary for any abstract idea, should yet by one leap of natural logic have risen to one of the very highest pinnacles of speculation, and both felt and expressed the idea of cause in the most general and comprehensive of all its forms. Surely this assumption, measured by any of those standards of experience or probability to which he professed to appeal, was as much of a miracle as those which he so decisively repudiated.

In one of his letters Voltaire declared that Locke was the only reasonable metaphysician that he knew, and that next to him he placed Hume. Did he ever read, we may wonder, that masterly essay on the

"Natural History of Religion," where Hume not only combats with his usual vigor and effectiveness the idea of the belief in one omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent spirit being the primary religion of men, and shows that polytheism precedes monotheism, but also traces the origin of all religion to its rudiment, in that "universal tendency among mankind to conceive all beings like themselves, and to transfer to every object those qualities with which they are familiarly acquainted, and of which they are intimately conscious?" The greater the knowledge we acquire of the spiritual rudiments of primitive people, the more certainly is it established that the idea of theism as the earliest and most elementary belief, which Voltaire had picked up from Bolingbroke and Pope, is untenable, and that Hume has been more and more fully warranted in saying that the only point of theology on which the consent of mankind is nearly universal is that "there is an invisible, intelligent power in the world, but whether this power be supreme or subordinate, whether confined to one being or distributed among several, what attributes, qualities, connections, or principles of action, ought to be ascribed to these beings, concerning all these points there is the widest difference in the popular systems of theology." This might be placing natural theology very low, but Hume at any rate placed it where he did and described it as he did, because he had knowledge enough of the condition of various nations in various parts of their his-

tory, and was sufficiently penetrated with a cautious and scientific spirit, to abstain from the unsupported and purely metaphysical conjectures of men like Voltaire and Rousseau. Well might the keen-eyed de Maistre describe him from the Catholic point of view as the most dangerous and the guiltiest of all those pestilent writers,— the one who employed most talent with most coolness to do most mischief.

If Voltaire had studied Hume, moreover, he might have learned how futile and inappropriate it is in the long run to examine a religion otherwise than in its most fundamental and comprehensive general ideas, and how narrow and superficial would every philosophic appreciation ultimately find what he called refutation by facts. For his own immediate purpose, which was to cover the Church and its creed with ridicule, the method of collecting all the ludicrous, immoral and inconsistent circumstances in the Scriptures and their current interpretation, was, as we have already said, a weapon potent enough. Voltaire, however, not only did not use, he never understood nor perceived, the fact that a religion rests for its final base on a certain small number of ideas, or that it is only by touching these, by loosening the firmness of their hold, by revealing their want of coherency and consistency with other accepted ideas, that we can expect to shake the superstructure. For example, if only the official exponents of religion had not been so firmly bent on making the feeblest of all their ramparts into their

very citadel, it would have been a very small thing to urge the truly singular quality of such miracles as those of the water made wine at Cana, of the cursing of the barren fig-tree, of the unfortunate swine who rushed violently down a steep place and were choked. These were legends that from the right point of view of religion were not worth defending, any more than from the right point of view of truth they were worth attacking. The details of the use of a supernaturally conferred power may best be let alone, until the probability of the existence and bestowal of such power has been discussed and decided. The important issue and matter of vital concern turned upon the general idea of the miraculous; yet this was what Voltaire, perhaps from an instinctive consciousness of the little capacity he possessed for genuine speculation, postponed to the really secondary purpose of disparaging particular cases of miraculous performance.

We are now touching what, before Hume, was the central defect of the eighteenth-century attack, judged philosophically rather than practically. The movement was a reaction against a certain set of ideas which had been incorporated in the Christian system, as that system was elaborated by the oriental sophisters. Yet the exact conflict between the old ideas and the new was never conceived, much less was it expressed, in clear comprehensive formulas. Consequently the most general terms for the debate were neither sought nor found, and hence the

oppressive narrowness, the stifling want of free air, throughout the controversy. The truth or falsehood which it is good for us to discover in connection with a religion resides not in detail, but in the largest general ideas of the subject. These draw all else along with them. Let us take an illustration from a characteristic of the anti-Christian attack which has already been mentioned. The Voltairean school, as we have before observed, habitually derided the sacred importance attached by the Church in all ages, from Saint Paul downwards, to the practice of continence. But there is no sign, so far as the present writer's knowledge goes, that they ever were near perceiving the origin of that superstition lying deep down for so many centuries in the human mind. The sanctity of continence was only one product of the old far-spreading conviction of all the evil and unholiness essentially inherent in matter. This conviction, which has itself a history and genesis well worth tracing, probably accounts for more of the peculiar manifestations contained in Christianity than any one principle of belief besides. From this metaphysical idea sprang the whole theory of asceticism; it had much to do indirectly with the first establishment of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ; it entered into the triumph of indispensable grace. The speculative origin of practices and sentiments which the heads of the western Church valued, modified, and sagaciously used for ecclesiastical or political reasons, ought never to be lost sight

of, because their duration has depended on the circumstance of the original speculative idea remaining deeply sunk, though not often put into articulate form, in the minds of the faithful, and of all others whom these practices and sentiments have influenced. One key to the central movement of the eighteenth century is the dispersion of this association of evil and corruption from matter. There was energetic and triumphant progress in the discovery of the laws of matter, in their most stupendous, overwhelming, and majestic order. There was a steady tendency to resolve mental manifestations into functions of matter. There was a general inclination to forget those depressing facts connected with the decay and dissolution of matter, which, in the dismal times when the Church was founded, had been thrust into a prominence so humiliating to human dignity. The general movement was carried too far by extreme spirits, but on the whole it was a salutary and much-needed protest against the limitation of knowledge within airy cloudlands where no true knowledge was to be reached, and of emotion within transcendental aspirations where the deep reality of human relations faded into dim distance.

It is only when controversy is conducted with reference to ground ideas of this kind, that the parties to it can be sure of being on the same plane, and, if they are not on the same plane, one of the least mischiefs is that their arguments fly over one another's heads. Voltaire failed, partly from want

of historic knowledge, partly from insufficient depth of nature, to see what these ground ideas were, against which he was fighting. Thus, to take another instance, he failed to see that the belief in the exertion of supernatural power, even on occasions which struck him as so frivolous, and in a manner undoubtedly incompatible with justice, was merely an incidental result of a profoundly rooted idea of the closeness, constancy, and mixed holiness and majesty, of the relations between man and an awful being other than man, endowed with powers denied to us, and animated by motives inscrutable to us. He chose, if we are not wrong in using a term that may imply much conscious deliberation, to identify his own conception of deity with the conception of deity in the first four centuries of the Christian era, simply because the object of each was called by a common name. He found that the actions attributed to the Supreme Being whom the Church revered, were unworthy of a personage endowed with the qualities which he ascribed to a supreme power, in his own version of that culminating conception. He was thus never on the same plane of thought or argument, but he never was near finding this out. The God whom he conceived was incapable, from the very nature attributed to him by his worshippers, of the various transactions, lofty and mean, sublime and puerile, described in the documents on which Catholicism relied, and the tradition by which it corroborated and interpreted them. The ground

idea of the belief in the miraculous was an extremely anthropomorphic notion of a divinity, possessed of complete power, but using it in obedience to motives which finite understandings cannot pretend to fathom or measure. Such a notion was the natural growth of the human mind, amid such a set of circumstances as attended the development and establishment of Christianity. Men sat in darkness, forlorn and without hope, and it is not hard for us to imagine the exultation with which some greater spirit would produce, and all others would embrace, the idea of this misery and darkness being no more than an outer accident, the mysterious and incomprehensible dispensation of a divine being, ever alive to the destinies of men, but holding them in the hollow of an unseen hand, and guiding them in ways that are not as our ways; ever remote from corporeal vision, but operating at a multitude of points on the spirit of each man through grace, and finally, by a consummating miracle repeated daily some thousands of times, severing this spirit from the probation of flesh, and prolonging its existence independently of the body through all eternity in modes of being, none the less real for being impossible to conceive. To Voltaire this was unspeakable foolishness. The prodigies of grace, of the resurrection of the body, of the incarnation of divinity, were inconsistent with the qualities which he imputed to the creator of the universe, and hence he contented himself with mocking at them; the real state of the

case was simply that a number of influences had drawn men aside from that conception of the creator, with which such prodigies were not inconsistent, but were on the contrary logically and inseparably associated.

This failure to rise to the highest ideas involved in the great debate explains, along with much besides, two striking facts connected with it. It explains the intense acerbity of the conflict, and the flaming depth of the chasm which divided and divides the two camps in France. For the best natures are most violently irritated and outraged by mocking and satiric attack upon the minor details, the accidents, the outside of the objects of faith, when they would have been affected in a very different way by a contrast between the loftiest parts of their own belief and the loftiest parts of some other belief. Many persons who would listen to a grave attack on the consistency, reasonableness, and elevation of the currently ascribed attributes of the Godhead, with something of the respect due to the profound solemnity of the subject, would turn with deaf and implacable resentment upon one who should make merry over the swine of Gadara.

The same circumstance, secondly, explains the absence of permanent quality about all that Voltaire wrote upon religion. For instance, men who sympathize with him in his aims, and even for their sake forgive him his method, who have long ago struck the tents under which they once found shelter in the

lands of belief, to whom Catholicism has become as extinct a thing as Mahometanism, even they will turn with better chance of edification to the great masters and teachers of the old faith, than to the fiery precursor of the new. And why, if not for the reason that while he dealt mainly with the lower religious ideas, or with the higher ideas in their lowest forms, they put these into the second place, and move with an inspiring exultation amid the loftiest and most general conceptions that fine imaginations and a soaring reason could discover among the spiritual treasures of their religion. They turned to the diviner mind, and exercised themselves with the weightiest and most universal circumstances of the destiny of mankind. This is what makes their thought and eloquence of perpetual worth, because the circumstances with which they deal are perpetually present, and the elements of life and character to which they appeal perpetually operative. The awful law of death, the impenetrable secret of the first cause, the fierce play of passion and universal distribution of pain, the momentariness of guilt and eternity of remorse, the anguish of bereavement that chokes and rends, the hopeless inner desolation which is the unbroken lot of myriads of the forlorn of the earth,— these ghostly things ever laying siege to the soul were known to a Bossuet or a Pascal, and resolved by a series of ideas about the unknowable power and the government of the world, which are no longer the mighty weapons of exorcism they once

were, but they are at any rate of due magnitude and proportion, sublime, solemn, never unworthy. We touch the hands of those who have walked with the Most High, and they tell us many moving wonders; we look on faces that have shone in rays from the heaven of noble thoughts; we hear solemn and melodious words from men who received answers from oracles that to us are very mute, but the memory of whose power is still upon us. Hence the work of these glowing mortals lives even for those to whom their faith is dead, while the words that Voltaire wrote on religion are lifeless as the Infamous which they so meritoriously slew. As we have said, he never knew the deeper things of Catholicism. This is what he wrote about the immortal Dante: "Everybody with a spark of good sense ought to blush at that monstrous assemblage in hell of Dante and Virgil, of Saint Peter and Madonna Beatrice. There are to be found among us, in the eighteenth century, people who force themselves to admire feats of imagination as stupidly extravagant and as barbarous as this; they have the brutality to oppose them to the masterpieces of genius, wisdom, and eloquence, that we have in our language. *O tempora, O judicium!*" To which prodigy of criticism we can only exclaim with the echo, *O tempora, O judicium!*

III.

Let us see shortly what was Voltaire's own solution of those facts of life with which religion has to deal. The Catholic solution we know, and can definitely analyze and describe; but the vagueness of Voltairean deism defies any attempt at detailed examination. We can perceive a supernatural existence, endowed with indefinable attributes, which are fixed subjectively in the individual consciousness of each believer, and which therefore can never be set forth in a scheme of general acceptance. The Voltairean deist — and such persons exist in ample numbers to this day — hardly ever takes the trouble to reconcile with one another the various attributes which he imputes at various times to some great master power of the universe. There is scarcely one of these attributes to which, when it comes to be definitely described, he does not encounter affronting contradiction in the real occurrences that arise from time to time to search and try all our theories, deistical, or other. The phenomena of moral and physical evil on the earth, and the arrival of disasters which make no discrimination between their victims, are constantly dealing sore blows to the conceptions which the deist loves to erect in moments of optimistic expansion, of the clemency, justice, and illimitable power of a being who governs the universe, and is a something outside and independent of it. These optimist conceptions, vague, unverified, free

of definite relations with any moral or social system, and furnishing no principle of active human association as the Catholic idea of deity had done, constitute the favorite religion or religiosity of those classes in all modern countries, which have found the Voltairean kind of objection to the Christian revelation insuperable, and which are so fortunate as to enjoy a full measure of material prosperity. To these classes the black side of life is strange and a matter of hearsay; and hence the awkwardness of reconciling their complacent theory with the horror of facts is never forced upon them. In their own happiness they love to superadd the luxury of thankfulness to the bounty of a being to whom they owe all, and to swell the tide of their own emotions by meditation on his infinite and unspeakable perfections. Proof they require none, beyond the loveliness and variety of external nature, the innocence and delight of all young creatures, the order of the seasons bearing us their copious fruit, the vivid intelligence and serviceable power of man, who is the divinely appointed recipient of all these multitudinous favors. Hence in proportion as this sort of deism stirs the soul of a man, the more closely are his inmost thoughts reserved for contemplation of the relations between the Supreme Being and his own individuality. It is a creed which is specially adapted for, and has been generally seized by, those with whom the world has gone very well, owing to their own laudable exertion, and who are inclined to

believe that the existing ordering of society is fundamentally the best possible. It is the superlative decoration of optimism.

The mass of men, those who dwell in dens and whose lives are bitter, have never, in spite even of Rousseau's teaching, accepted deism. An opportunity for trying the experiment had occurred in the fourth century, and the lesson should not be forgotten. Deism had been the prevailing opinion in religion, but, as the most instructive of all the historians of the dissolution of the empire observes, it was generally felt that deism did not supply the void occasioned by the absence of the multitude of sympathetic divinities of the pagan system. Its influence was cold and inanimate. The common people are wont to crave a revelation, or else they find atheism a rather better synthesis than any other. They either cling to the miraculously transmitted message with its hopes of recompense, and its daily communication of the divine voice in prayer or sacrament, or else they make a world which moves through space as a black monstrous ship with no steersman. The bare deistic idea, of a being endowed at once with sovereign power and sovereign clemency, with might that cannot be resisted and justice that cannot be impugned, who loves man with infinite tenderness, yet sends him no word of comfort and gives him no way of deliverance, is too hard a thing for those who have to endure the hardships of the brutes, but yet preserve the intelligence of men.

Comment concevoir un Dieu, la bonté même,
Qui prodigua ses biens à ses enfans qu'il aime,
Et qui versa sur eux les maux à pleines mains?
Quel œil peut pénétrer dans ses profonds desseins?
De l'être tout parfait le mal ne pouvait naître!
Il ne vient point d'autrui puisque Dieu seul est maître:
Il existe pourtant. O tristes vérités!
O mélange étonnant de contrariétés!
Un Dieu vint consoler notre race affligée;
Il visita la terre et ne l'a point changée!
Un sophiste arrogant nous dit qu'il ne l'a pu;
Il le pouvait, dit l'autre, et ne l'a point voulu;
Il le voudra, sans doute; et tandis qu'on raisonne,
Des foudres souterraines engloutissent Lisbonne,
Et de trente cités dispersent les débris,
Des bords sanglans du Tage à la mer de Cadix.[1]

A bald deism has undoubtedly been the creed of some of the purest and most generous men that have ever trod the earth, but none the less on that account is it in its essence a doctrine of self-complacent individualism from which society has little to hope, and with which there is little chance of the bulk of society ever sympathizing. In truth, one can scarcely call it a creed. It is mainly a name for a particular mood of fine spiritual exaltation; the expression of a state of indefinite aspiration and supreme feeling for lofty things. Are you going to convert the new barbarians of our western world with this fair word of emptiness? Will you sweeten the lives of suffering men, and take its heaviness from that droning piteous chronicle of wrong and cruelty and despair, which everlastingly saddens the

[1] Poëme sur le Désastre de Lisbonne. *Œuvres,* xv, p. 53.

compassionating ear like moaning of a midnight sea; will you animate the stout of heart with new fire, and the firm of hand with fresh joy of battle, by the thought of a being without intelligible attributes, a mere abstract creation of metaphysic, whose mercy is not as our mercy, nor his justice as our justice, nor his fatherhood as the fatherhood of men? It was not by a cold, a cheerless, a radically depraving conception such as this, that the Church became the refuge of humanity in the dark times of old, but by the representation, to men sitting in bondage and confusion, of godlike natures moving among them under figure of the most eternally touching of human relations, a tender mother ever interceding for them, and an elder brother laying down his life that their burdens might be loosened.

We have spoken of Voltairean deism, and the expression is a convenient one to distinguish from the various forms of mystic theology, which gloomily disclaim any pretence to be rational, the halting-place of spirits too deeply penetrated with the rationalistic objections of Voltaire to accept revelation, and either too timorous or too confident to acquiesce in a neutral solution. It is unjust, however, to attribute to Voltaire himself a perfect adherence to the deistical idea. For the first half of his life there is no doubt that it floated in his mind, as in so many others, in a random manner, as the true explanation of the world. His introduction to the teaching of Newton would give a firmer shape to such a belief.

He has indeed told us that it was so. He mentions that in the course of several interviews he had with Doctor Samuel Clarke in 1726, this philosopher never pronounced the name of God without a curious air of awe and self-collection, and he commemorates the impression which the sight of this habit, and reflection upon its significance, made upon him. Still it was not a very active or vital element of belief with him even then, but rather of the nature of the sublimest of poetic figures.

> Oui, dans le sein de Dieu, loin de ce corps mortel,
> L'esprit semble écouter la voix l'Éternel.

Clearly this kind of expression means very little, and has no source in the deeper seats of the writer's feeling. A considerable number of Voltaire's deistical ejaculations, and on these occasions he threw into them a measure of real unction, may be fairly traced to the extraordinary polemical utility of an idea of spotless purity, entire justice, inexhaustible mercy, as an engine of battle against men who in the sacred name of this idea were the great practitioners of intolerance and wrong.

> Ignorer ton être suprême,
> Grand Dieu! c'est un moindre blasphème,
> Et moins digne de ton courroux
> Que de te croire impitoyable,
> De nos malheurs insatiable,
> Jaloux, injuste comme nous,
> Lorsqu'un dévot atrabilaire
> Nourri de superstition,
> A par cette affreuse chimère,
> Corrompu sa religion,

Le voilà stupide et farouche:
Le fiel découle de sa bouche,
Le fanatisme arme son bras:
Et dans sa piété profonde
Sa rage immolerait le monde
A son Dieu, qu'il ne connaît pas.

To have a conception of perfect goodness was a manifest convenience in confronting men who were to be proved masters of badness. But when the pressure of circumstance forced Voltaire to seek in earnest for an explanation of the world, which he had formerly been content to take in an easy way upon trust, then the deism, which had been barely more than nominal at best, was transformed into a very different and far sincerer mood. It would obviously be a gross blunder from a logical point to confound optimism with deism, but it is clear that what shook Voltaire's conviction of the existence of a deity was the awakening in him of a keener sense of the calamities that afflict the race of man. Personal misfortunes perhaps had their share. It was after the loss of Madame du Châtelet, and after the rude dispersion of his illusions as to Frederick, when he barely knew whither to turn for shelter or a home, that the optimism which he had learnt in England began to lose its hold upon him. We must do him the justice to add that he was yet more sensible of disasters which affected others. The horrid tide of war which devastated Europe and America, the yet more hateful tide of persecution for opinion which swept over France, and the cruel maladmin-

istration of justice which disgraced her tribunals, stirred all that was best in him to the very depths. The only non-dramatic poem of his which has strength, sincerity, and profundity of meaning enough firmly to arrest the reader's attention, and stimulate both thought and feeling, is that fine and powerful piece which he wrote on the occasion of the great earthquake of Lisbon. Here he threw into energetic and passionately argumentative verse the same protest against the theory that whatever is is best, which he afterwards urged in a very different form in the "refined insolence" of Candide. He approaches more nearly than a quarter of a century before he would have thought possible, to the deep gloom of the Pascal against whose terrible pictures he had then so warmly protested. He sees mankind imprisoned in a circle of appalling doom, from which there is no way of escape. Unlike Pascal, he can find no solution, and he denounces that mockery of a solution which cries that all is well in accents stifled with lamentation. He protests against the delusion of forcing the course of the world's destiny into a moral formula, that shall contain the terms of justice and mercy in their human sense.

Aux cris demi-formés de leurs voix expirantes,
Au spectacle effrayant de leurs cendres fumantes,
Direz-vous: C'est l'effet des éternelles lois,
Qui d'un Dieu libre et bon nécessitent le choix?
Direz-vous, en voyant cet amas de victimes:
Dieu s'est vengé, leur mort est le prix de leurs crimes?
Quel crime, quelle faute ont commis ces enfans

Sur le sein maternel écrasés et sanglans?
Lisbonne, qui n'est plus, eut-elle plus de vices
Que Londres, que Paris, plongés dans les délices?
Lisbonne est abimée, et l'on danse à Paris.

He equally refuses, though not in terms, to comfort himself by the reflection that, in default of a better, the current ragged theory of the providential government of the universe, because it may be possible, must be true. He can find no answer, and confesses his belief that no answer is to be found by human effort. Whatever side we take, we can only shudder; there is nothing that we know, nothing that we have not to fear. Nature is mute, and we interrogate her in vain; the book of destiny is closed to our eyes.

L'homme, étranger à soi, de l'homme est ignoré.
Que suis-je? où suis-je? où vais-je? et d'où suis-je tiré?
Ato es tourmentés sur cet amas de boue,
Que la mort engloutit, et dont le sort se joue,
Mais atomes pensans, atomes dont les yeux,
Guidés par la pensée, ont mesuré les cieux,

Au sein de l'infini nous élançons notre être,
Sans pouvoir un moment voir et nous connaître.
* * * * * *
Le passé n'est pour nous qu'un triste souvenir;
Le présent est affreux, s'il n'est point d'avenir,
Si la nuit du tombeau détruit l'être qui pense.

He abandons Plato and rejects Epicurus. Bayle knows more than they, as, with the balance in his hand, he teaches men to doubt; wise enough, great enough, to be without a system.

In a note he adds to this glorification of Bayle, whom he styles the advocate-general of the philos-

ophers — the thinker in whose pages all opinions are set forth, all the reasons which shake them and all which uphold are equally investigated, while he abstains from giving any conclusions. Elsewhere he explains that when he describes reason as having made immense progress in Germany, he does not refer to those who openly embrace the system of Spinoza; but the good folk who have no fixed principles on the nature of things, who do not know what is, but know very well what is not, these are my true philosophers.

It would not be difficult to find a score of passages in which the writer assumes or declares certainty on this high matter to be attainable, and to be entirely in one direction. His opinions undoubtedly shifted with the veering of his moods, but on the whole these axioms of suspense mark the central point to which they constantly tended to return, and at which they rested longest. That dark word, Shut thine eyes and thou shalt see, opened no road for him. The saying that the Most High may be easily known, provided one does not press for definition, offered no treasure of spiritual acquisition to the man who never let go, even if he did not always accurately appreciate, Locke's injunction to us to be careful to define our terms. We cannot label Voltaire either spiritualist or materialist. The success with which he evades these two appellations is one of the best available tests of a man's capacity for approaching the great problems with that care and positive judgment,

which are quite as proper to them as to practical affairs or to physical science.

Thus with reference to the other great open question, he habitually insisted that the immortality of the soul can never possibly be demonstrated, and that this is why it has been revealed to us by religion, which is perhaps Voltaire's way of saying that it is no near concern of his. Sometimes he argued from considerations of general probability. The brutes feel and think up to a certain point, and men have only the advantage over them of a greater combination of ideas; the more or less makes no difference in kind. "Well, nobody thinks of giving an immortal soul to a flea; why should you give one any the more to an elephant, or a monkey, or my Champagne valet, or a village steward who has a trifle more instinct than my valet?" Again, he retorted significantly on those who contended with a vehemence of prejudice known in some places even to this day, that belief in the immortality of the soul is an indispensable condition of probity: as if the first Jews accepted that dogma, and as if there were no honest men among them, and no instruction in virtue.

In fine, then, we search Voltaire in vain for a positive creed, which logic may hold in coherent bonds, or social philosophy accept as a religious force. The old word about his faith must be pronounced true. It remains a creed of negation. But still, be it always understood, negation of darkness. And this inevitably leads in the direction of the day.

It was an indispensable step in the process of transition. Men, it is constantly being said since the violent breaking-up of French society, will never consent to live on no better base than articles of denial and formulas of suspense, for are not the deepest parts of human character moved by strong yearning for relationship with the unknowable? It may be so, and if it be, the Voltairean movement was the great instrument in leading, not merely a scanty group of speculative intellects, but vast bodies, large nations, of common folk to perceive, or dimly to conjecture, that this object of adoration which their eyes strain after *is* unknowable, and that there is no attainable external correlative of their deep desire. Voltaire never went so far in the direction of assertion as Rousseau, and he never went so far in the direction of denial as Holbach. And, whatever we may say generally of the horror of the world for the spirit that denies, all that was best and most truly progressive in French society during the eighteenth century, Turgot and Condorcet no less than Beaumarchais, showed itself content to follow him in this middle path. His appreciation of religion was wanting in a hundred vital things, just as some may say that Luther's was, but it contained the one idea which the deepest spirit of the time prompted men to desire, the decisive repudiation of the religious notions of the past. We must call this negative, no doubt, but no word should frighten us away from seeing how much positive aspiration lay underneath. When men

are in the mood of France a century and a quarter since, when all that an old civilization has bestowed on them of what is best and strongest, rises up against all that the same civilization has bequeathed to them of what is pestilent and dangerous, they are never nice critics. They do not decline a reinvigorating article of faith, because it is not a system, nor do they measure a deliverer by syllogism. The smallest chink may shine like light of the sun to prisoners long held in black and cavernous recesses.

When Bayle's Dictionary came out, we read, so great was the avidity to have sight of it, that long before the doors of the Mazarin library were open, a little crowd assembled in the early morning of each day, and there was as great a struggle for the first access to the precious book, as for the front row at the performance of a piece for which there is a rage. This was the beginning of an immense impulse of curiosity, eager to fill the vacuum occasioned by the slow subsidence of the old religion, which had once covered not only faith, but science, history, dialectic, and philosophy, all in a single synthesis. It was this impulse which Voltaire both represented and accelerated. In these periods of agitation, men forgive all to one who represents without compromise or diminution their own dominant passions. Vehemence of character counts for more than completeness of doctrine, and they crave a battle-cry, not a dissertation. They need to have their own sentiment aggressively presented, and

their own defects of boldness or courage at once rebuked and supplemented by a leader whose purpose can never be mistaken, and whose words are never nipped by the frost of intellectual misgiving. All through the century there was slowly growing up an inner France, full of angry disgust against the past. Its germ was the crowd eager to read Bayle. Its outcome was the night of the fourth of August, 1789, when the civil order of society was overthrown between a sunset and a dawn. Voltaire, as we have seen, studiously abstained from any public word upon things political, but it was he who in the long interval between these two events held men by a watchword to which the political decay of the country gave such meaning, that of hatred to the old. And there was no such steadfast symbol of the old as the Church, to him and his school a lurid beacon on a monster-haunted shore.

Voltaire's selection of the Church as the object of his attacks marks an important difference between him and the other great revolutionary precursor. Rousseau's Savoyard Vicar was perfectly willing to accept the cultus of Christianity, even when he had ceased to accept its dogma. He regarded all particular religions as so many salutary institutions, all good so long as they were the organs for a due service of God. He actually celebrated mass with more veneration after the acquisition of his new principles, than he had been accustomed to do when he supposed that the mass was an occasion of personal

divine presence. This kind of teaching was clearly to perpetuate and transfix forever the form of religion which each country, or any given set of men in it, might possess. It was to stereotype belief, as it is stereotyped among the millions in the East. Whence was reform to come, whence any ray of new light, whence a principle of growth and activity for the intelligence of men? How on these terms is truth to win the battle at a single point? This was the beginning of a fatal substitution of bland emotional complacency for robust cultivation of the reason, and firm reverence for its lessons as the highest that we can learn. Voltaire no doubt did in practice many a time come to terms with his adversary while he was yet on the way with him; but disagreeable as these temporizings are to us who live in an easier day, they never deceived any one, nor could they ever be mistaken for the establishment of intellectual treason as a principle, or of philosophic indifference as a climax. As has been said, though he writes in the midst of the old régime, in the face of the Bastille, and with the fetters of the enemy in some sort actually upon him, he still finds a thousand means of reaching you. He is always the representative of reason, and never of sentimentalism. He was not above superficial compromises in matters of conduct, and these it is hard or impossible to condone; but at any rate he is free from the deeper and more penetrating reproach of erecting hypocrisy into a deliberate doctrine.

We do not know how far he ever seriously approached the question, so much debated since the overthrow of the old order in France, whether a society can exist without a religion? He says in one place that to believe God and spirits corporeal is an old metaphysical error, but absolutely not to believe in any god would be an error incompatible with wise government. But even this much was said for the sake of introducing a taunt against the orthodox, who by a strange contradiction had risen up with fury against Bayle for believing it possible that a society of atheists could hold together, while they insisted with just as much violence that the empire of China was established on a basis of atheism. His natural sagacity would most likely have shown him that this is one of the sterile problems, with which the obstructive defender of things as they are tries to draw the soldier of improvement away from his strongest posts. Whether a society can exist without religion or not, at least its existence as a structure for whose duration we can be anxious, must depend on the number of men in it who deal honestly with their own understandings. And, further, is no man to be counted to have a religion who, like Voltaire, left great questions open, and put them aside, as all questions, that must from the limitations of human faculty eternally remain open, well deserve to be put aside? Must we ever call an unknown God by one name? Are there so few tasks for one on

earth, that he must strain all his soul to fix the regimen of high heaven?

Voltaire, there is every reason to think, did in an informal kind of way suppose in the bottom of his heart that there is nothing in human nature to hinder a very advanced society from holding perfectly well together, with all its opinions in a constant state of analysis. Whatever we may think of it, this dream of what is possible, if the activity of human intelligence were only sufficiently stimulated and the conditions of social union were once so adjusted as to give it fair play, unquestionably lies at the root of the revolutionary ideas with all those who were first stirred by Voltaire rather than by Rousseau. Condorcet, for instance, manifestly depends with the firmest confidence upon that possibility being realized. It is the idea of every literary revolutionist, as distinguished from the social or economic revolutionist, in France at the present day. The knowledge that this was the case, added to the sound conviction that men can never live by analysis alone, gave its fire to de Maistre's powerful attack, and its immense force to Burke's plea for what he called prejudice. But the indispensable synthesis need never be immovably fixed, nor can it soon again be one and single for our civilization; for progress consists in gradual modifications of it, as increase of knowledge and unforeseen changes in the current of human affairs disclose imperfections in it, and wherever progress is a law the stages of men's advance

are unequal. Above all, it is monstrous to suppose that because a man does not accept your synthesis, he is therefore a being without a positive creed or a coherent body of belief capable of guiding and inspiring conduct.

There are new solutions for him, if the old are fallen dumb. If he no longer believes death to be a stroke from the sword of God's justice, but the leaden footfall of an inevitable law of matter, the humility of his awe is deepened, and the tenderness of his pity made holier, that creatures who can love so much should have their days so shut round with a wall of darkness. The purifying anguish of remorse will be stronger, not weaker, when he has trained himself to look upon every wrong in thought, every duty omitted from act, each infringement of the inner spiritual law which humanity is constantly perfecting for its own guidance and advantage, less as a breach of the decrees of an unseen tribunal, than as an ungrateful infection, weakening and corrupting the future of his brothers. And he will be less effectually raised from inmost prostration of soul by a doubtful subjective reconciliation, so meanly comfortable to his own individuality, than by hearing full in the ear the sound of the cry of humanity craving sleepless succor from her children. That swelling consciousness of height and freedom with which the old legends of an omnipotent divine majesty fill the breast, may still remain; for how shall the universe ever cease to be a sovereign wonder of

overwhelming power and superhuman fixedness of law? And a man will be already in no mean paradise, if at the hour of sunset a good hope can fall upon him like harmonies of music, that the earth shall still be fair, and the happiness of every feeling creature still receive a constant augmentation, and each good cause yet find worthy defenders, when the memory of his own poor name and personality has long been blotted out of the brief recollection of men forever.

CHAPTER VI.

METHODS AND MERITS AS HISTORIAN.

The activity of the foremost men of the eighteenth century in the composition of history is too remarkable a circumstance, not to deserve some attempt at explanation. There were historians in previous ages, but in the eighteenth century there was both in France, and afterwards in England, a special and extraordinary development in this direction. Partially no doubt this was due to the general movement of curiosity, the widespread desire for all kinds of knowledge, which was in the air. Men were emancipating themselves from the trammels of an authority which had not widened the limits of inquiry in the same proportion as human faculties had strengthened, and, amid the universal expansion of intelligent interest and the eager scrutiny of all the objects of knowledge which the new dawn was baring to sight, it was not possible that the order of political and social facts in former epochs should be neglected. This, however, does not sufficiently explain why such a man as Hume betook himself to the com-

position of history, or why Gibbon found himself best able to attack Christianity by tracing some of the most important parts of its annals, or why Voltaire, who lived so entirely and intensely in the present, should have thought it worth while to give so much labor to presentation of the past. It is a striking fact, which must be something more than an accident, that the best secular histories which remain from this period, one of them the most striking monument in historical literature, were written by the most marked assailants of reigning superstition.

Was it not, indeed, to be expected that as the dark clouds of an absorbing consciousness of the supernatural cleared away, men of understanding would be more and more drawn towards study of human action, and that the advance of society under purely natural and positive conditions would immediately seize a foremost place among the objects of experiential inquiry? It is too constantly maintained by persons with something of a vested interest in darkness, that those who do not worship the gods are indifferent to the happiness of men. Yet the history of intellectual progress would seem to show that it was not until the commencement of a rapid decline in the acceptance of terrorist and jealous deities and incomprehensible dogmas, that serious attention was given to some of the subjects in which a sound knowledge is among the most indispensable conditions of the advancing welfare of men. For instance, as soon as the hold of ancient

versions of the supernatural was loosened over the stronger spirits, by the middle of the century there instantly took place an astonishing development of activity in the physical sciences. The interest of historic and economic studies was at least as pressing. Becoming aware that men had made their own world, thinkers found the consideration of the process by which this world is made, and the order of society established and developed, forced upon them with an entirely new significance. The dry bones of the ancient valley of annalists and chroniclers were made to live, and the great work of the reconstruction of the past was begun, with an alertness and perseverance that has not been surpassed even in an age of far purer and juster historical intelligence. It was quite reasonable that the conviction of each act in the universe, from the crash of an empire to the fall of a sparrow to the ground, being due to an arbitrary and inscrutable decree, should prevent the rise of history from the level of annals into the region of philosophy. The decay of this theory of the government of the universe was as reasonably the cause of a new mode of looking at the long records of the race, and we find ourselves moving in a day of historical masterpieces.

Voltaire has told us the circumstances under which he was led to approach the philosophy of history. Madame du Châtelet, whose mind would fain have reached every kind of knowledge, but who was especially apt for metaphysics and geometry, had

conceived an aversion for history. "What does it matter to me," she would ask, "a French woman living on my estate, to know that Egil succeeded Haquin in Sweden, and that Ottoman was the son of Ortogrul? I have read with pleasure the history of the Greeks and the Romans; they offered me certain great pictures which attracted me. But I have never yet been able to finish any long history of our modern nations. I can see scarcely anything in them but confusion; a host of minute events without connection or sequence, a thousand battles which settled nothing. I renounced a study which overwhelms the mind without illuminating it." To this frank statement of the case, to which so many thousands of persons in all epochs would so heartily subscribe, Voltaire replied by pointing out that perhaps the study of history would be no waste of time, if by cutting away all the details of wars, as tedious as they are untrustworthy, all the frivolous negotiations which have been nothing but pieces of purposeless cheating, all the minute incidents which stifle great events, and by retaining those which paint manners, you made of this chaos a general and well-arranged picture; in short, if you tried to disengage from the concourse of events the history of the human mind. Not all the faults of execution ought to blind us to the merit of this notion of the true way of studying history, or to the admirable clearness of vision with which Voltaire, not only in this but in all his other historical pieces, adhered to his

own two leading principles; first, that laws, arts, manners, are the chief matter and concern of history; and second, that "details which lead to nothing are in history what baggage is to an army, *impedimenta,* for we must look at things in large, for the very reason that the human mind is small and sinks under the weight of minutiæ." Minutiæ ought to be collected by annalists, or in some kind of dictionaries where one might find them at need. In this last point Voltaire, as might be expected, was more just than Bolingbroke, who had said somewhat petulantly that "he had rather take the Darius whom Alexander conquered for the son of Hystaspes, and make as many anachronisms as a Jewish chronologer, than sacrifice half his life to collect all the learned lumber that fills the head of an antiquary." The antiquary's is a vocation like another, and the highest kind of history can only flourish on condition that the humbler ancillary kind flourishes also, and that there are patient and scrupulous men to mark the difference between Darius Codomannus and Darius the son of Hystaspes.

We may say that three kinds of men write history: the gazetteer or annalist, the statesman, and the philosopher. The annalist's business is to investigate and record events, and his highest merits are clearness, accuracy, and simplicity. The political historian seeks the superficial and immediate causes of great transactions, and he serves us by mixed penetration and soundness of judgment. The historical

philosopher is concerned only with groups of events, the changes and movements that transform communities, and with the trains of conditions that lead to such movements. The majority of historians, from the illustrious Bacon down to the compiler of a manual, illustrate the first kind. Thucydides and Tacitus, among the ancients, a Machiavelli or a Finlay, among moderns, may illustrate the second kind. As Voltaire was sometimes gazetteer and sometimes statesman, so Montesquieu took the statesman's point of view in his reflections on the decline of Rome, and that of the philosopher in the Spirit of Laws. It is the statesman or man of the world, who, after recounting Cæsar's failure on one occasion to comply with the etiquette of the senate, proceeds to make the following reflection, that " we never offend men more, than when we shock their ceremonies and usages: seek to oppress them, and that is sometimes a proof of the importance you attach to them; but shock their customs, and that is always a mark of contempt." It is the philosopher, feeling for the causes of things and their order, who being led to inquire into the spirit or meaning of Laws, understands such an inquiry to involve a comparative investigation of the relations between laws and physical climate, the quality of ground, situation and extent of territory, the mode of life of the people, agricultural, hunting, or pastoral; between laws and the freedom of the constitution, the religion, wealth, trade, moral ideas, and manners, of the inhabitants;

above all, historically, between laws and their origin and the order of things on which they were first founded.

In a similar way we may divide Voltaire's historical pieces into two main classes. Indeed, if we count the "Annals of the Empire," which he wrote to please the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha, he may rank also under the third remaining head among the annalistic historians. This, however, is too unsatisfactory a piece of work for us to care either to classify or to remember it. The subject was not of his own selection, he knew comparatively little about it, his materials were extremely scanty and imperfect, and he composed it at a time when his whole mind was violently perturbed by his recent quarrel with Frederick, and torn by anxiety where he should find a home in rest and freedom. It was the only work he ever wrote, for which he perhaps had no heart, and the least observant reader will notice how vast a difference this made in the temper of its composition. Indeed, Voltaire was not born to be a simple chronicler. The realistic and practical leanings of his intellect naturally gave him a distaste for the collection of mere uninterpreted and unapplied facts. His clear comprehensiveness, the product of a vigorous imagination with strong sense, as naturally impelled him to group circumstances, and to introduce the widest possible generality among them. He has one of the peculiar gifts of the historian, as distinguished from the gazetteer, of throwing rapid

glances over a wide field on the suggestion of a minor fact as he passes by it, and of converting what to others would be the mere unconsidered trifles of narrative into something possessed of its due measure of vitality and significance. He fills his pages with reflections that are usually not brought from very far depths, but which are almost always lively, just, and in real matter. Perhaps this is not an unmixed good, for it is not unconnected with an extraordinary evenness and light facility of style, which tends to draw the reader somewhat too rapidly and too smoothly over ground that had been rugged enough to the actual travellers. It tends therefore tacitly to plant a false impression about the tardiness, difficulty, peril, and infinitely varied possibilities of the social movements which are history's object and material. Perhaps a reader has a better idea of the true manner in which events march, from Comines or Clarendon, than from all the elegance and manifold graces of Voltaire, and we sometimes feel inclined to repeat de Maistre's angry demand for that grave and unhasting dignity which is the life of history.

We have already noticed one of the differences between Voltaire and Rousseau, which arose from the predominance of sentiment over reason in the latter. In the present connection another fact well worth noticing is that Rousseau was entirely wanting in either taste or serious regard for history. The past seems to have been to him a kind of blurred

tablet, confused and indecipherable, interposed between the vision of men and the only thought or knowledge which it is good for them to possess. Voltaire's reading of this tablet was inadequate enough, in many respects it was even a grave distortion of the truth; but with that sound sense in which Rousseau was so absolutely deficient, he felt how irrational it was, in the first place, to shut our eyes deliberately to the course and meaning of all the foregone action of the race, and, in the second, to leave unattacked and unturned the strong position which the traditional parables of the past and their undisturbed interpretation conferred upon the champions of orthodoxy and absolutism. Rousseau, being a sentimentalist, appears to have discerned nothing of this. His ideas all involved a breach with the past, as Voltaire's did, but Voltaire deserves credit for perceiving that, to make this effective, you must at least find out as well as you can what the past was.

For his four works in the class of political history he had the best attainable authorities and material, and no one was ever more diligent in putting them to the best possible use.[1] His acute sense, strengthened

[1] The dates of the publication of Voltaire's historical works are these: *Charles XII.*, 1731; *Siècle de Louis XIV.*, 1752 (a portion of it in 1739); *Annales de l'Empire*, 1753-54; *Essai sur les Mœurs*, 1757 (surreptitiously in 1754); *Histoire de Russie*, Pt. I in 1759, Pt. II in 1763; *Précis du Siècle de Louis XV.*, 1768; *Histoire du Parlement de Paris*, 1769.

by contact with the world and its most active personages, made him what we may almost call prematurely scientific in his demand for adequate evidence and proof. It is rather striking, for example, to find him anticipating more recent objections to the trustworthiness of Tacitus, pointing out the extraordinary improbabilities in his account of Tiberius, Nero, and the others. There is all the difference, he says, between a faithful historian equally free from adulation and hatred, and "a malicious wit who poisons everything through the medium of a concise and energetic style." Are we to believe, he asks elsewhere, on the story of a man who lived long after Tiberius, that this emperor, nearly eighty years old, who had up to that time been decent almost to austerity, yet passed all his time in debaucheries hitherto unknown, and so monstrous as to need new names for them? And in the same way he questions the alleged atrocities of Nero and Caligula, as well as the motives imputed to Domitian by Tacitus for the frequency with which he sent to inquire after the health of Agricola. These historic doubts sprang from none of the political judgment or feeling which propounds them in more modern times, but purely from scientific incredulity. "History," he once wrote, "is after all nothing but a parcel of tricks that we play the dead." He did not hold this slightly splenetic theory, in which assuredly there is a painful truth, to absolve him from the duty of doing what he could to belie it, and to make history

as correct and as faithfully representative of actual occurrences, as careful inquiry from those most likely to know the characters of the most prominent actors could make it. In the composition of the "*Siècle de Louis XV.*" he had of course the advantage of knowing all these leaders of the public activity personally and at first hand, while if he had not that advantage to the same extent in the "*Siècle de Louis XIV.,*" he at least mixed on intimate terms with many who had been intimate with the court of the great monarch. For the history of Russia he was amply provided with documents and authentic narratives from the Russian court, at whose solicitation he undertook a work which was the first full introduction of that hitherto barbarous and unknown country to the literature of civilized Europe. His letters to Schouvalof, the imperial chamberlain, attest the unremitting industry with which he sought for every kind of information that might be useful to him. " That enlightened spirit which now reigns among the principal nations of Europe, requires that we should go to the bottom, where in former times a historian barely thought it worth while to skim the surface. People wish to know how a nation grew together; what was its population before the epoch of which you treat; the difference in the number of the regular army then and in former times; the nature and growth of its commerce; what arts have sprung up within the country, and what have been introduced from elsewhere and been perfected there;

what used to be the ordinary average revenue of the state, and what it is now; the birth and extension of its navy; the proportion in numbers between its nobles and its ecclesiastics and monks, and between the latter and the cultivators of the soil, etc." Even importunities of this kind continued over a space of some years, and the copious responses which they brought never consoled Voltaire for not having made the journey to the Russian capital in his proper person. "I should have learnt more from you in a few hours of conversation," he wrote to Schouvalof, "than all the compilers in the world will ever teach me." In writing the "History of Charles XII. of Sweden," one of the most delightful of his books, the art of which is none the less because it is so little ostentatious and striking and seems so easy, he had procured a large quantity of material from Fabrice, who knew the Swedish king during his detention at Bender and subsequently, and met Voltaire in London. This material was supplemented in later years by information picked up at Lunéville from the ex-Polish king Stanislaus, who was indebted to Charles for his sovereignty, that true δῶρον ἄδωρον. "As for the portraits of men," Voltaire declared, "they are nearly all the creations of fancy; 'tis a monstrous piece of charlatanry to pretend to paint a personage with whom you have never lived." Napoleon, in the memorable campaign of 1812, coming to various places which Voltaire had occasion to describe in his "History of Charles XII.," found

his account weak and inaccurate, and threw it aside in favor of Adlerfeldt. This was to be expected from the very merit of the book; for how should a picture, painted in large for the general instruction of the world, satisfy the minute requirements of strategical topography? It was precisely Voltaire's object to separate history from geography, statistics, anecdote, biography, tactics, and to invest it with an independent character and quality apart from all these.

It is another of the distinctions of his new method of writing history that, with the exception of the book on Charles XII., he throws persons and personal interests into a second place, as being no more than instruments or convenient names for critical turning-points in the large movements of peoples. In the narration of the rise of Russia to a place among civilized nations, the character of Peter the Great inevitably comes into marked prominence, because when a population lies on the stagnant level of barbarism, the first man who summons them to undertake the task of national elevation constitutes an element of paramount importance in their annals. In proportion, however, as they rise to the fulfilment of this surpassing work, the importance of the heroic individual diminishes; as the national self-consciousness and collective powers become greater, the figure of the individual shows less.

Voltaire was always conscious, though not so clearly as writers are now, of the great historical

principle that besides the prominent men of a generation there is a something at work underneath, a moving current on whose flood they are borne. He never fixed this current by any of the names which now fall so glibly from our lips,— tendency of the times, tenor of public opinion, spirit of the age, and the like, by which we give a collective name to groups of sentiments and forces, all making in what seems to be a single direction. But although unnamed, this singular and invisible concurrence of circumstance was yet a reality to him. The age was something besides its heroes, and something besides its noisiest and most resounding occurrences. His divisions of the great epochs of humanity are undoubtedly open to much criticism, because the principles on which he drew the dividing lines have lost their force in new generations. It was to be expected that they would do so; and his four great epochs were not likely to remain the four great epochs of a posterity, which has partially learnt the lesson that he had not learnt at all, that perfection in the fine arts is not the highest mark of an age in which humanity may glory. Nevertheless, we are bound to recognize that a new way of regarding human action, as well as a new way of composing history, was being introduced by a writer whose first paragraph declared that he proposed to himself a greater object than an account of the life of Louis XIV.; that he designed to paint for the instruction of posterity, not the actions of a single man, but the

spirit of men; and that while all periods must be alike to one who only desires to fill his memory with facts, discrimination among them cannot be dispensed with for one who thinks.

Hence also the propriety of discrimination among the various kinds of fact which are at the historian's disposal, and in this order Voltaire's whole soul revolted against the reigning practice and prescription. "I would rather have details," he wrote to one of his intimates so early in his career as 1735, "about Racine and Despréaux, Molière, Bossuet, Descartes, than I would about the battle of Steinkirk. There is nothing left but the names of men who led battalions and squadrons. There is no return to the human race from a hundred engagements; but the great men I have spoken of prepared pure and everlasting pleasures for mortals still unborn. A canal-sluice, a picture by Poussin, a fine tragedy, a truth established, are all of them things a thousand times more precious than the whole mass of annals of the court, and than all the narratives of campaigns." From this and from a multitude of other passages, as well as from his actual compositions, we perceive that the activity of a court and the manœuvres of an army were no longer in Voltaire's eyes the fit substance of history. One reason for this might be his lively sense of the impossibility of knowing the character and motives of people with whom one has not lived, or the real cause of even the most momentous intrigues and negotiations in which one has not

taken a personal share. A still deeper reason would be his most rational conviction that these matters are only of moment to us for their larger results and unmistakable outcome, and from the profoundly true and important principle that the progress of intellectual enlightenment, material prosperity, and moral elevation is not only a feature in the history of a nation, but does itself constitute that history, while all records of other transactions in the course of its annals, achievements in diplomacy, feats of arms, revolutions in policy, have no true historic value, except for the light they shed upon this economic, intellectual and moral progress, and are not worth studying except in that light. We may see the immediate effects of Voltaire's influence most markedly of all in Gibbon, but in a less important shape in the general account of the Middle Ages which Robertson contributed to his "History of Charles V." (1769), and which remained for many years the most instructive piece that our literature possessed upon the character and spirit of the feudal system and other features of the Middle Ages. Adam Ferguson's "Essay on the History of Civil Society" (1767) bears traces of the same influence. In both of these cases much also must be added for the kindred authority of Montesquieu. One has some hesitation in adding Hume to the list in the present connection, because his history, the composition of which extended from 1752 to 1763, ought perhaps to be counted rather the direct and indepen-

dent outcome of the French philosophic spirit, than of the French historic spirit which itself proceeded from the philosophy; and because, moreover, Hume, as a historian, has some of Voltaire's most serious defects, without that breadth and size which constituted his greatest merit, though it is needless to point out how many merits Hume had of his own. It is worth remarking that in some pages which he wrote on Hume's History, Voltaire gave it a joyful welcome, as might be expected, and particularly to those parts which we now esteem most lightly, such as the contemptuous account of Cromwell.

To return, however, to the point from which we have digressed. One very direct consequence of the historical principle we have described, and of the way in which it was illustrated in the histories of Louis XIV. and Louis XV., and most of all in the "Essay on Manners," was the degradation of war from the highest to the lowest place among the objects of the historian's regard. War began for the first time to be systematically considered and treated as a mere instrument and means, and not as one of the most serious of social ends. We can never honor Voltaire too long nor too deeply for the vehemence and sincerity of his abhorrence of the military spirit. Nowhere do we feel more distinctly that he marked the end of the mediæval temper, than in his noble protests against the glory of bloodshed. The great orators of the Church to the very last donned the robes of their most sumptuous rhetoric,

when they were called to consecrate the virtues of the victorious soldier. The pages of the Old Testament supplied them with a hundred baleful heroes to whom they might liken their warrior, and a hundred cruel and bloody tropes with which they might decorate the funeral oration. So long as the atrocities of the Hebrew chiefs and people, their treacheries and slaughters, were held sacred and celebrated with unction, it was not likely that the voice of the peacemaker could make itself heard.

Voltaire not only held up these demoralizing records to the odium they deserve; he directly taxed the clergy with their failure to discharge the very highest part of their duty. Of the five or six thousand sermons of Massillon, he asked, are there a couple where you could pick out a word or two against the scourge and crime of war? Bourdaloue preached against impurity, but what sermon did he ever direct against the murder, rapine, brigandage, and universal rage, which desolate the world? "Miserable physicians of souls, you declaim for five quarters of an hour against the mere pricks of a pin, and say no word on the curse which tears us into a thousand pieces! Philosophers and moralists, burn your books: so long as the caprice of a handful of men will cause the massacring in all loyalty of thousands of our brothers, the part of the human race which is devoted to heroism will contain all that is most frightful in human nature. What concern to me are humanity, benevolence, modesty, temperance,

gentleness, wisdom, piety, so long as half an ounce of lead shatters my body, and I die at twenty in torments unspeakable, surrounded by five or six thousand dead or dying, while my eyes, opening for the last time, see the town I was born in delivered to fire and sword, and the last sounds that reach my ears are the shrieks of women and children expiring in the ruins— and the whole for the pretended interests of a man that we do not know?" His rebuke to Montesquieu is still more distinctively modern. The author of the *"Esprit des Lois"* had said that among societies it sometimes happens that natural defence possibly involves the necessity of attack, when a nation perceives that a longer peace would place another nation in a position to destroy it. "If ever there was a war evidently unjust," Voltaire replies, "it is that which you propose; it is to go and kill your neighbor for fear your neighbor should be in a condition to attack you; that is to say, you must run the risk of ruining your country, in the hope of ruining without reason some other country. If your neighbor grows too powerful during a time of peace, what hinders you from growing powerful like him? If he has made alliances, make alliances on your side. If, having less religion, he has all the more manufacturers and soldiers for it, imitate him in so sage an economy. If he drills his sailors better, drill yours too; all that is perfectly just. But to expose your people to the most horrible misery, in the idea, which is so often chimerical, of

crushing your dear brother, the most serene bordering prince —! 'twas never for a president of a pacific order to give you such a piece of counsel." The book in which this sound view of justice and expediency in the dealings of nations with one another was pressed upon the attention of France, was published in 1764, five years before the birth of the man who turned the tide back, and made the international policy of France a synonym both for iniquity and folly. On the 15th of August, 1769, Voltaire concluded his letter to d'Alembert with his usual vivacity: "Adieu; my compliments to the devil, for it is he who governs the world." If he had known that, while he was writing, Napoleon Bonaparte had come into the world, and could at the same time have foreseen the newcomer's destiny, he might have said the same thing more seriously. Voltaire never played the sentimentalist. He knew that there are complexities of affairs which only the sword can cut. But he was the first influential writer who deliberately placed war among retrograde agencies, and deliberately dwelt upon peaceful industry as the true life of nations.

Diplomacy and its complex subterranean processes, which have occupied so extremely disproportionate a space in written history, and which are in acted history responsible for so much evil, were in the same way informally relegated to the region of inhuman occupations. Its methods were the tortuous and depressing methods of the same past,

which had made the many the playthings and unhappy instruments of the few, and had never interrupted the triumphant manœuvres of craft and subtlety by a whisper for the claims of humanity and justice. Voltaire scarcely ever speaks of negotiations between contending powers without a shrewd thrust, half contemptuous and half angry. The plain where some negotiations took place in the struggles among the descendants of Charles the Great is still called the Field of Lies; a name, he says, that might well be common to most spots where men have negotiated. And this represents his general tone in speaking of a branch of activity which may interest the professional diplomatist in all its details, but which, as he thought, can only concern the historical student in its results. Here Voltaire represented a marked tendency, which waxes stronger as societies grow more penetrated with popular forces, to divest diplomacy of a professional quality, and to throw the adjustment of the relations between nations as entirely as possible into the hands of plain men of firm and upright character, and full knowledge of the special matters at issue.

It is, however, when we come to the ground idea of the "Essay on Manners"[1] that we feel the full breath of the modern spirit, and perceive that at

[1] *Mœurs,* is untranslatable by any single English word. The full title is *"Essai sur les Mœurs et l'Esprit des Nations, et sur les principaux faits de l'Histoire depuis Charlemagne jusqu' à Louis XIII."*

length we are nearing the wide expanse of the sea. There we emerge absolutely from the narrow conception of universal history, with which Bossuet had familiarized men's minds in the "Discourse on Universal History." This famous piece, which has had at least as much praise as it merits, if we are to consider reason as well as eloquence, was fundamentally and in substance no more than a bit of theological commonplace splendidly decorated. Bossuet indeed spoke of "the concatenation of human affairs," but only in the same sentence with "the sequence of the counsels of God." The gorgeous rhetorician of the Church was not likely to rise philosophically into the larger air of universal history, properly so called. His eloquent discourse is a vindication of divine foresight, by means of an intensely narrow survey of such sets of facts as might be thought not inconsistent with the deity's fixed purpose to make one final and decisive revelation to men. No one who looks upon the vast assemblage of stupendous human circumstances, from the first origin of man upon the earth, as merely the ordained antecedent of what, seen from the long procession of all the ages, figures in so diminutive a consummation as the Catholic church, is likely to obtain a very effective hold of that broad sequence and many-linked chain of events, to which Bossuet gave a right name, but whose real meaning he never was even near seizing. His merit is that he did in a small and rhetorical way, what

Montesquieu and Voltaire afterwards did in a truly comprehensive and philosophical way; he pressed forward general ideas in connection with the recorded movements of the chief races of mankind. For a teacher of history to leave the bare chronicler's road so far as to declare, for example, the general principle, inadequate and overstated as it is, that "religion and civil government are the two points on which human things revolve," even this was a clear step in advance — and to dismiss the long series of emperors from Augustus to Alexander Severus in two or three pages was to show a rare sense of large historic proportion. Again, Bossuet's expressions of "the concatenation of the universe," of the interdependence of the parts of so vast a whole, of there coming no great change without having its causes in foregoing centuries, and of the true object of history being to observe in connection with each epoch those secret dispositions of events which prepared the way for great changes, as well as the momentous conjunctures which more immediately brought them to pass — all these phrases seem to point to a true and philosophic survey. But they end in themselves, and lead nowhither. The chain is an arbitrary and one-sided collection of facts. The writer does not cautiously follow and feel after the successive links, but forges and chooses and arranges them after a pattern of his own, which was fixed independently of them. A scientific term

or two is not enough to disguise the purely theological essence of the treatise.

Bossuet's Discourse is moreover constructed wholly on the theory that a special revelation was delivered to the Jews, and in tracing their course we have fast hold of the chain by which it has pleased heaven to communicate to earth all the truths we possess as to the highest things. Such a conception stifles a modern reader. The first pages of the "Essay on Manners," sometimes placed separately as the "Philosophy of History," prove that we have escaped from the cave. The chosen people fell into rank with other peoples, that equally supposed themselves to be chosen by their own peculiar gods. They lose the towering pre-eminence in virtue and light and divine favor with which their own records and Bossuet's interpretation had so splendidly invested them. We find that their pretensions were not unique, but universal among nations in such a stage; that their virtues were not singular, though some of their vices seem so. In a word, if some of Voltaire's details are crude and rudimentary, at least he has the merit of showing to his unaccustomed readers what vast epochs of time, what uncounted multitudes of men, what varied movements of the human spirit, surround the little speck of Judaism.

The bulk of the "Essay" was composed in 1740, but it is probable that this preliminary examination of other oriental nations, their practices, institutions, and religious ideas, was suggested by Montes-

quieu's memorable book, which appeared in 1748, some years before the publication of the "Essay on Manners." It is in point of execution much less satisfactory than what follows, for Voltaire's knowledge of Greek and Hebrew was inadequate, and he fell into various errors which his adversaries happily possessed scholarship enough to expose. In the modern provinces of the book, which constitute the important part of it, he was much more entirely at home in his subject. Here his familiarity with detail, considering the vast quantity of his other employments, is extremely surprising, and perhaps in no other book of equal generality have there been discovered so few serious inaccuracies, though none have encountered more hostile critics.

Prejudice, alas, spares truth and light no more when it narrows the vision of a free-thinker, than when it distorts the faculty of the devout. Being a reaction against Bossuet's unreasonable exaltation of the Jews and their history, Voltaire's conception of the place due to them partook of the inevitable fault of all reactions, and left out of sight considerations which it is eminently unscientific not to remember. "You never find," he says, "a generous action in the annals of the Hebrews; they knew neither hospitality nor liberality nor clemency. Their sovereign bliss is to practice usury with foreigners, and this spirit of usury is so rooted in their hearts, that it is the continual object of the figures they employ in the eloquence which is peculiar to them. Their glory

is to deliver to fire and slaughter the small villages of which they may be able to take possession. They assassinate their masters when they are slaves, and they never know how to pardon when they are victorious; they are the enemies of the human race." This is as great an exaggeration on one side, as Bossuet's exaltation of them and their deeds was on the other side. We ought to admit what abominable traits the character and history of this race unfortunately present, without forgetting how much is owing to them for preserving in its sublimest shape and investing with the most deeply impressive images and associations, that idea of monotheism which, if destined to be superseded by other ideas more commensurate with the limits of human intelligence, must still be counted the germ of much that is purest and loftiest and most inspiring among the ideals of western civilization.

The same kind of extreme prejudice which drove Voltaire into maintaining of the Jews, not that they were a people whom we should do very ill either to imitate or admire, but nothing less than that they were the enemies of the human race, found vent in such assertions as that if any one could have restored the empire to its strength, or at all events retarded its fall, that man was the Emperor Julian. A historian may justly contend, if he thinks that the evidence warrants him, that Julian belongs to the type of virtuous reactionists, just as we may say it of Wesley or the chiefs of the Tractarians. But

to make such an assertion as that the repression of Christianity after the middle of the fourth century, even supposing it to have been possible of achievement, could have given back to the rapidly declining empire a strength of which all the roots were lifeless, was to falsify history for the sake of exalting the name of an apostate. A Roman aristocrat, blind to the real operation and comparative value of the forces at work, might be pardoned for holding Christianity guilty of the general dissolution around him; but it was a strange phantasy for a philosopher of the eighteenth century to suppose that the Christian system, in the shape which it had assumed by Julian's time, did not offer principles of firmer association, than the mere rites of a paganism which was spontaneously decaying with a rapidity that increased day by day. There is no stronger illustration of the twist which polemical fury may give to the most acute intelligence, than this belief of Voltaire's, that an organization which had attracted to itself every able and statesmanlike intellect of the time, could do less for the regeneration of the empire than the initiated disciple of Platonist theurgy.

His account of the history of the Church is composed in the same vein, and we may see where Gibbon, who was a reader of Voltaire, drew the inspiration of the solemn sneer with which he sapped solemn creed. "So many frauds, so many errors, so many disgusting absurdities," says Voltaire,

" with which we have been inundated for seventeen hundred years, have been unable to do any harm to our religion. It is unquestionably divine, since seventeen centuries of imposture and imbecility have not destroyed it." Voltaire thought as ill as possible of the century to which he belonged; we cannot therefore charge him with the inconsistency which marks some of his most prominent disciples, who while they accepted such an account of the vileness of the Church as he had given them, did not scruple to believe that, as if by miracle, seventeen centuries of steady depravation were *per saltum* to be followed by an eighteenth and other centuries of boundless virtue and enlightenment. Still it is wonderful that he should have been able to appreciate the admirable character of the best sovereign of the thirteenth century, Louis IX., and to describe his motives and his achievements so generously, and yet should never have thought of the education and surrounding spiritual conditions by which such a character had been formed. If the power of Catholicism for evil was so great and decisive, it would have been reasonable to suppose that it had some share also in moulding to good those who came forth from it the very flower of humanity. But Voltaire did not know how much a man is the product of a system operating on, and with, the individual predisposition, or he would not have chidden St. Louis for remaining on the level of the prejudice of his time, instead of changing the spirit of his age. How should St. Louis have risen

from the prejudice of his age, when it was exactly that prejudice which had formed him, and of which he represented the worthy side?

Even without this inconsistency, the fundamental error is bad enough. We get very wearied of the persistent identification of the Church throughout the dark ages with fraud and imposture and sinister self-seeking, when we have once learned, what is undoubtedly the most important principle in the study of those times, that it was the churchmen who kept the flickering light of civilization alive amid the raging storms of uncontrolled passion and violence. The truth is that Voltaire never realized civilization as an organism, which if not surrounded with the proper conditions of life will perish, and which will prosper and wax stronger exactly in proportion as it is nourished. That the light was more than once very near sinking in the West under the waves of barbarism, as it has actually sunk in the eastern portions of the empire, seems to have been an all-important fact which he either never saw, or which, if he saw it, never impressed him as assuredly it ought to have done.

This is the more curious, as he was able to perceive, in a way in which it were much to be wished that more recent historians might show an equal discernment, that we ought to use the terms of civilization, with all their complex and accumulated associations, in an extremely modified sense in speaking of the centuries between the fifth and the

thirteenth, just as it is the gravest mistake to suppose that, because you can express the results of the various contests of those times in terms of philosophy, therefore the actors in any one of them were both conscious of its most general bearings, and were animated by large and philosophical inclinations. For example, after he has told us how William the Conqueror sent to the Pope Harold's battle-standard and a small portion of the small treasure that an English king might possess in those times, he proceeds to reduce the transaction to what he conceived to be its true proportions, in the following manner: "Thus," he says, "a barbarian, the son of a harlot, the murderer of a legitimate king, shares the plunder of this king with another barbarian; for if you take away the names of duke of Normandy, king of England, and pope, all is reduced to the action of a Norman brigand and a Lombard receiver of plunder." This being the case, the secular possessors of power being so rude, petty, and barbarous, their contests being "those of bears and wolves," their rapacity and violence being tempered by few of those ideas of justice which form the bonds of society in its more advanced stages, it ought to have struck even the most ardent enemy of ecclesiastical pretensions as a thing in the highest degree unphilosophical, to pour all the ill epithets of usurpation upon the virtuous efforts of the great churchmen, who were least touched by the spirit of violence, to take away as much power as they could from barbarous

princes and nobles, who were most impregnated with that and all other dark spirits. The smaller the difference between the least moral and the most moral orders in a community, the more desirable it is that the order with even a small advantage should acquire as much power as possible; for the reason that so near an approach to equality in morals is most likely to occur when the average is low, and when therefore the need to prevent it from falling any lower is most urgent. Granting that the ecclesiastics were only slightly the superiors of the barbarous laymen, this is all the better ground for rejoicing that they succeeded in converting their ascendency of moral idea into an ascendency of political fact.

In short, Voltaire's great panorama, magnificent as it is and most royally planned, is not drawn in lines and with color that explain the story or lay bare the principles of its progress. The plan is imposed from without, just as in Bossuet's case, not carefully sought from within the facts themselves. What is meant then by the assertion that Voltaire's "Essay" is one of the foundations of modern history? If he gives no explanation of the course of history, none to himself probably, and none to us assuredly, what is his merit? This: that he has fully placed before us the history which is to be explained; that he has presented the long external succession of facts in their true magnitude and in a definite connection; that he did not write a history of France, or of the papacy, or of the Mahometan power, or of the cru-

sades, but that he saw the advantage, as we see the unavoidable necessity, of comprehending in a single idea and surveying in a single work the various activities, the rise and fall of power, the transference from one to another of political predominance, the contributions to the art of living, among the societies which were once united in a single empire. The history of each of these societies, England, France, Spain, Italy, the Byzantine Empire, is followed in relation to the history of Europe, which is indeed composed of these co-ordinate parts. The movement of communities since the dissolution of the Roman Empire is exhibited in a collective form, and that it should be exhibited and accepted in this form was obviously a preliminary step to an organic treatment of the multiplied laws of social physics.

" There are some events," he wrote in a note to his best poem, " which have effects, and others which have none. It is with the chain of events as it is with a genealogical tree, where we perceive branches that become extinct at the first generation, and others that continue the race. Many events remain without any filiation. It is thus that in every machine there are effects necessary to the movement, while others are indifferent, following the operation of the first, and leading to nothing. The wheels of a vehicle serve to make it go; but whether they raise a little more or a little less dust, the journey is accomplished equally. Such is the general order of the world, that the links of the chain are not deranged

by a little more or a little less of irregularity." The figures in this passage serve adequately to describe his own treatment. We see in the "Essay" the lines of the genealogical tree, but we do not learn the laws of the transmission of qualities from one stock to another; we see the links of the chain, but not the conditions which fastened each to the other; conditions, indeed, only to be grasped through a scientific study of human nature which Voltaire had never made; and finally we see the towering car drawn slowly along a devious road by sweat and strain of millions, but we know not why it went by this road rather than another. In a word, the inner machinery of societies and of their movement remains as far from our sight as it ever was. The study of those economic and material forces which have so profound an influence upon social transformations, was in its infancy, and the Economists, who really saw that there are definite laws regulating the play of these forces, unfortunately mixed up with their speculations a number of chimerical fancies, which Voltaire was too acute to accept, but not patient enough to sift. In this respect he is as defective as Gibbon, in whose book, so justly famous for its splendid breadth of conception and industrious elaboration of detail, we have much of that meagre philosophy which consisted in the exposure of falsehood, but little of the true science which shows us the numerous organs of society in connection with their actual play and function. Neither Gibbon nor

Voltaire made any contribution, nor seems to have been aware of the importance of contributing, to that study of the fundamental conditions of the social union, which Aristotle commenced, and which both Bodin in the sixteenth century and Montesquieu in the eighteenth had so meritoriously continued. Nevertheless, it was much to lead men to study the history of modern Europe as a whole, and we may say of Voltaire in connection with history what he said of Corneille in connection with tragedy — "It is so great a merit to have opened the career, and inventors are so much above other men, that posterity pardons their greatest faults."

CHAPTER VII.

THE PHILANTHROPIST OF FERNEY.

VOLTAIRE, as we have seen, took possession of Ferney in 1758, and he lived here almost without a break for something like twenty years. His estate was a feudal seigniory in the district of Gex, on the very frontier of Switzerland, but in France, though enjoying immunity from French taxation. He built a new manor-house, and in his capacity of lord of the manor replaced the dilapidated little church of the estate by a new one, very small, very plain, and about which, notwithstanding its famous inscription of which he so often boasted,—"*Deo erexit Voltaire*,"—much more noise has been made, than so simple and natural a proceeding at all calls for. Madame Denis kept house for him, and according to the Paris gossips of the time, on an extravagant scale, which often produced ruptures between the two. Guests were incessant and the hospitality ungrudging. He complained during the Seven Years' War of the embarrassment of being a Frenchman, when he had to entertain daily at dinner Russians, English, and

Germans. He protests that he is weary of being hotel-keeper in general for all Europe, and so weary was he at one time of this noisy and costly post, that the establishment was partially suspended for upwards of a year. One of the most generous of Voltaire's many generous acts was his reception into his house of a child who had no other claim on him than that of being the great-granddaughter of the uncle of Corneille. A soldier ought to succor the niece of his general, he said. He took the liveliest interest in the little maid's education, though she appears to have been a sulky pupil, and eventually he married her with due dower to one Dupuits. The bustle and expense of his establishment became greater than ever, and in the spring of 1768 Paris was as much electrified by news of a revolution at Ferney, as she has been since by some revolutions in her own streets. Madame Denis and the two Dupuits had suddenly made their way to Paris, and for a year and a half Voltaire was left in peace, part of which he employed sensibly in having his house cleaned from cellar to garret,—a bit of news which is handed down to our times, since, according to Grimm, the domestic arrangements of the manor-house at Ferney interested at that moment more or less every court in Europe. In the autumn of 1769 Madame Denis returned, and with her the old stir and extravagance were resumed, for Voltaire was one of the best-humored of men to his family and friends, and could deny his niece nothing. We have

more than one description of this too immortal niece. They are all equally unflattering. Her homeliness of appearance amounted to the ugliness that is bitter. She was destitute of wit, and had a vulgar soul. Born to be the insipid gossip of a bourgeois circle, says one charitable writer, but having by chance the first man in the nation for an uncle, she learned to chatter about literature and the theatre, as a parrot learns. She wrote a comedy; but the players, out of respect for Voltaire, declined to act in it. She wrote a tragedy; but the one favor which the repeated entreaties of years could never wring from Voltaire was that he would read it. She had histrionic as well as dramatic ambition, and here worked a miracle, for her representation of "*Mérope*" once drew floods of tears from some English ladies. Her affectation of intellect had not cooled the reality of simple sensation, and if she loved art, she was said not to despise gallantry. At any rate, though she was only sixteen years younger than her uncle, she needed continual festivities and crowds of guests.

Ferney was rather a difficult spot for a woman with a passion for the hum of cities. For five months in the year, says Voltaire, my deserts are, on the admission of Russians, worse than Siberia itself; we see thirty leagues of mountain, snow, and precipices: it is Naples in summer, Lapland in winter. One year he marks with word of bitterness snow falling thick in the middle of May. Four feet of snow in the courtyard constituted a normal winter

state. He commemorates with enthusiasm how one day, through these four feet of snow, he saw porters bringing him a hamper of champagne from a friend; for the more generous sort of Burgundy with which he ordinarily recruited himself had fallen short, and he had been reduced to the humble vintage of Beaujolais.

Yet in the midst of a thousand discomforts and hardships we never hear him wishing to be back in Paris. It remained to him the accursed city, as it had been before his journey to England. He always thought with horror of its cabal, intrigue, frivolity, and sovereign indifference to the ruin of the kingdom and the shedding of innocent blood. There can be no doubt that this wise exile prolonged his days. He was constantly complaining of illness, and he passed months at a time in bed, which may in truth have been the best possible preservative of life for one of his temperament. Yet in spite of this avoidance of society, this passion for his study, the man of ordinary capacity, with no more than an ordinary working day, may marvel how amid so many distractions the master of the house contrived to write so many scores of pieces, large and small, and so many hundreds of letters, grave and gay. Of these letters nearly seven thousand are already in print, and M. Beuchot, most carefully informed of all Voltaire's editors, thinks there are likely to be quite as many more still in undiscovered existence. Ferney was the centre of the most universal and varied cor-

respondence that any one man has ever carried on. Frederick the Great was not the only crowned head with whom Voltaire interchanged royal communication. Catherine II. of Russia, of Anhalt-Zerbst by birth, was the helpful patroness of Diderot and d'Alembert, and was always eager to hear some word from the patriarch of their encyclopædic church, only praying him not to think her too importunate. Christian VII. of Denmark apologizes for not being able at a stroke to remove all the obstacles that lie in the way of the civil liberty of his subjects. Gustavus III. of Sweden is elated by the thought that Voltaire sometimes casts a glance on what is going on in the North, and protest that this is their greatest encouragement to do as well as they can in all ways. Joseph II. would fain have called at Ferney, while travelling incognito through France, but fear of his mother's displeasure held him back, the high and devout nature of Maria Theresa always finding Voltaire's mockery of sacred things deeply repugnant, as we may easily believe.

Besides sovereigns who wrote to him as to an equal, every young aspirant to literary distinction, however unknown and obscure, sought a criticism from Ferney. Twenty years before he settled down here, Voltaire had been consulted by Vauvenargues, and had replied with words of painstaking and generous counsel. It was always the same with him. No young author ever solicited advice in vain, and he was never sparing either of trouble or praise.

The Marquis of Chastellux sent him a copy of his "*Félicité Publique*," and was raised to the seventh heaven by a letter of thanks, in which Voltaire tells him: "I covered the margin of my copy with notes, as I always do when a book charms and instructs me; I even took the liberty of not always sharing the author's opinion. I am very old and very feeble, but such reading makes me young again." And the letter contains a large number of points where he thinks the author in error.

Besides kings and the writers of books, plain men also besought his dictum on high matters. "A burgomaster of Middleburg," he informs Madame du Deffand, "whom I do not know, wrote to me a little while since, to ask me in confidence whether there is a God or not; whether, in case there be one, He takes any heed of us; whether matter is eternal; whether it can think; whether the soul is immortal; and begging me to answer by return of post." One may suspect that a little coloring is added here by the master hand, but the substantial facts are probable enough. He corresponded with cardinals, marshals of France, and bishops, and he corresponded with Helvétius and with Diderot, who, greatly to the indignation of the business-like patriarch, had a bad habit of leaving letters to answer themselves. If two cavalry officers fell to disputing over the mess-table as to the propriety of using some bit of old French, it was to Ferney that the reference was instantly made. We get an idea of the kind of

imperial authority which attached to Voltaire's judgment, from the eagerness with which Turgot sought, without revealing his name, an opinion from Ferney as to the worth of a translation with which he lightened the heavy burden of his intendance at Limoges, a translation of the "Eclogues" and fourth book of the "Æneid" into French metric verse. "They say," wrote Turgot, "that he is so busy with his 'Encyclopædia,' as neither to speak nor to write to any one." If Turgot could have seen Voltaire's correspondence for 1770, he would have found out how far this rumor was from the truth, and in fact he did get an answer to his own letter; but it can hardly have been very much more satisfactory than silence would have been, for Voltaire, while profuse in praise of the fidelity and spirit of the translation, unfortunately did not detect that it was meant for anything more ambitious than simple prose with enthusiasm in it. As Turgot especially valued in the patriarch his "superb ear," the blow was as sharp as it well could be. He was little concerned or surprised on learning the fallacious reasoning of the poet in political economy. "Reasoning," he adds, "has never been Voltaire's strong point." And that was true in matters of abstract science, but he was an unrivalled popularizer of the results of other people's reasoning, from Newton's "Principia" down to Middleton's "Free Enquiry," and this popularization was what the conditions of the time caused to be most ardently demanded. The proof of

the demand we may see in the extraordinary respect and curiosity, or dislike and alarm, with which Voltaire for the twenty crowning years of his life was regarded throughout the whole of civilized Europe.

It is impossible to read the multitudinous volumes of Voltaire's correspondence, and they are being added to every two or three years, with entire satisfaction. They are wittier than any other letters in the world. For lightness, swiftness, grace, spontaneity, you can find no second to them, at however long an interval. But they abound in many things which are disagreeable in the letters of an old man who had so true an interest in the spread of virtue, knowledge, and the other conditions of human dignity. These, however, may be passed over as the innocent and unconscious unseemliness of a very gay nature living in a very free age. It is less easy to banish the unpleasant impressions with which we find him playing the equivocal part of being all things to all men. One would have been pleased to have a little more stiffness, a little less pliancy of phrase. We would not go through the world insisting on grim Puritanic earnestness at every moment of a man's life, but Voltaire's lively complaisance with all sorts of unworthy people is something worse than unedifying. One can hardly help sympathizing with d'Alembert's remonstrance, " You have rather spoiled the people who persecute us. 'Tis true you have had greater need than anybody else to keep them quiet, and that you have been obliged to offer a

candle to Lucifer to save yourself from Beelzebub, but Lucifer has only grown the prouder, without Beelzebub growing the less malignant." The truth probably is that Voltaire did not always take much thought of Lucifer or Beelzebub. For one thing, he was, as we have said more than once, intensely sympathetic by temperament, and in writing to a friend, or even an acquaintance only, he was for the moment animated by a lively good will and anxiety to be in harmony with his correspondent. There was nothing false in these purring pleasantries, with which he amused all correspondents alike. They came as naturally from his mobile and genial constitution, as an equality of prosaic moroseness comes from persons of fundamentally different constitutions. For another thing, the old fashion of his youth never dropped away from him, and the elaborate courteousness and friendly ardor of manner, which he had learned among the aristocratic friends of the days of the Regency and afterwards at Paris and Versailles, did not desert him in the solitudes of the Jura. He was to the last a man of quality, as well as a crusher of the Infamous, and to the last he kept up the tone of one who had been a gentleman of the chamber to one king, and court-chamberlain to another. Voltaire's temperament and earliest surroundings fully explain what was a more public, as well as more serious, falling away from the rigorous integrity which men are now accustomed to demand from the leaders of unpopular

causes. His sins in this order are nearly as numerous as his public acts. Rousseau, perhaps we may say without breach of charity, as much from vanity as principle, prefixed his name to all that he wrote, and he paid the penalty in a life of wandering and persecution. Voltaire in his later days as invariably sheltered himself behind the anonymous, and not only disclaimed works of which it was notorious that he was the author, but insisted that his friends should impute them to this or that dead name. Nobody was deceived. While he got unwelcome credit for a multitude of pieces that were not his own, assuredly nothing really his ever failed to be set down to its true author. We can only say that this was the evil practice of the time, and that Voltaire was here little worse than Turgot and many another man of general virtuousness, to whom the ferocity of authority would not even allow freedom enough to plead for tolerance, much less to utter uncertified opinion. "Time," said d'Alembert, apologizing for some whiff of orthodoxy which Voltaire scented in one or two articles in the "Encyclopædia," "will make people distinguish what we thought from what we said." Condorcet, as we know, deliberately defended these deceptions, which did not deceive, while they did protect. He contended that if you rob a man of his natural right of publishing his opinions, then you lose your own right to hear the truth from the man's lips. Undoubtedly all laws admit that duress introduces new conditions

into the determination of what is right and wrong in action, or at least that it mitigates pains and penalties, and the position of every claimant for free speech was in those days emphatically a position of duress. The choice lay between disavowal on the one hand, and on the other abstention from proclaiming truths by which only society could gain the freedom it so much needed; between strict anonymity and leaving the darkness unbroken. And we must remember that disingenuous tricks to conceal authorship were not assuredly so unpardonable, when resorted to as protectives against imprisonment, confiscation, and possible peril of life, as they are now among ourselves, when they serve no more defensible purpose than sheltering men who have not the courage of their opinions, against one or two paltry social deprivations.

The monstrous proceedings against La Barre, and the ease with which in this and numerous other cases the jurisprudence of the tribunals lent itself to the cruelty of fanatics, no doubt excited in Voltaire a very genuine alarm for his own safety, and probably with good reason. We know that he could not venture to visit Italy, in consequence of his just fear lest the Inquisition should throw their redoubtable foe into prison, and the parliaments of Toulouse and Abbeville had perpetrated juridical murders as iniquitous as any of the proceedings of the Holy Office. And though it is easy and right for the young, who live in a time when you are not imprisoned or hanged

or decapitated for holding unpopular opinions, to call out for manliness to the uttermost in these things, one must make allowance for an occasional fit of timorousness in a man of eighty, whom nature had never cut out for a martyr. Yet more than once, these fits committed Voltaire to acts which were as great a scandal to the devout as to the atheists. That he should rebuild the ruinous little chapel of his estate was not much more remarked, than it would be for a Protestant landlord to subscribe to repair the Catholic church on an Irish property containing only Catholic tenants. The gorgeous ceremony with which in his quality of lord he commemorated its opening, made everybody laugh, not excepting the chief performer, for he actually took the opportunity of lifting up his voice in the new temple and preaching a sermon against theft. The bishop of Annecy in Savoy, his diocesan, was furious at this mockery, and urged the minister at Paris to banish Voltaire from France. In order to avert the blow, Voltaire tried to make a nominal peace with the Church by confessing, and participating in the solemnity of an Easter communion (1768). The bishop wrote him a long letter of unctuous impertinences, to which Voltaire replied by asking very tartly why the discharge of so ordinary a duty called for this insolent congratulation. The philosophers of Paris were bitterly scandalized, and some of them wrote to the patriarch of the sect to remonstrate. Even d'Alembert, his own familiar friend, could not refrain from protest. Voltaire

could give no better reasons for his strange lapse than we may hear given every day in our own country, by men who practise hypocritical compliances for the sake of a little ignoble ease, and thus perpetuate the yoke. He owed an example to his parish, as if the example of feigning a belief which he repudiates could be a good example for one to set in any parish. It was very well to shirk these observances in Paris, because there in the tide of business one finds an excuse or is not missed, but in the country no such excuse offers itself. One must stand well with the curé, be he knave or dunce. One must respect the two hundred and fifty timorous consciences around one. And so forth, down that well-worn list of pleas by which men make anxiety about the consciences of others a substantial reason for treachery to their own. Voltaire, besides all these, honestly added the one true reason, that he did not mean to be burned alive, and that the only way of making sure against such a fate was to close the lips of spies and informers.

The bishop knew perfectly well that the squire, who had made his Easter communion in so remarkable manner in 1768, was the author of the "Philosophical Dictionary," of which a brand-new edition, amended and revised, made its appearance in 1769; and he appears to have forbidden the priest of Ferney to confess or administer the eucharist to the chief of the flock. Voltaire was at once seized with a fever, and summoned the priest to administer

ghostly comfort. The priest pleaded the horrible rumors of the world as to the damnable books of which the sick man was alleged to be the author. Voltaire replied by warning him very peremptorily that in refusing to administer the viaticum he was infringing the law, and the consequence was that he did duly receive the viaticum, after which he signed a solemn act in the presence of a notary, declaring that he pardons his various calumniators; that "if any indiscretion prejudicial to the religion of the State should have escaped him," he seeks forgiveness from God and the State; and finally he forgave the bishop of Annecy, who had calumniated him to the king, and whose malicious designs had come to naught. The priest and notary afterwards falsified this amazing declaration so as to appease the bishop, and came to Voltaire praying him not to betray them. "I prove to them," he says, "that they will be damned, I give them something to drink, and they go away delighted." A younger philosopher of his school remarks with his accustomed gravity on this most singular transaction, that the satisfaction of forcing his priest to administer by fear of the secular judges, and of insulting the bishop of Annecy in a juridical manner, cannot excuse such a proceeding in the eyes of the free and firm man, who weighs calmly the claims of truth and the requirements of prudence, when laws contrary to natural justice render truth dangerous and prudence indispensable. To which reflection we may perhaps add

another, suggested by the cruel experience of the Church in France within five and twenty years from Voltaire's impious communion, that if any order, secular or spiritual, constrains its adversaries under penalties to the commission of base acts, then if the chances of time should ever transfer the power to the other side, that order has only itself to blame for whatever wrong may mark the retaliation. There is no more dangerous policy in affairs of state than to strip your opponent of self-respect, and this the descendants of the persecutors found out to their extreme cost, when in 1793 they had to deal with the descendants of the persecuted.

One other curious piece of sportiveness in his dealings with the Church deserves to be noticed. In the year 1770 the post of temporal father of the order of Capuchins for the district of Gex became vacant. Voltaire applied for it and the general at Rome, perhaps listening to a word from Ganganelli, or else from the Duchess of Choiseul, sent to Ferney the letters patent conferring upon its patriarch this strange dignity, and also affiliating him to the order. What were Voltaire's motives in so odd a transaction, it is not very hard to divine. Probably, he thought even this humble office would be some protection against persecution. Then it gave him an opportunity of harassing his enemy, the bishop of Annecy. Thirdly, it amused that whimsical element of farce and mischief which was always so irrepressible in him, from the early days when he is said

to have nearly damned his own play by appearing on the stage as the high-priest's train-bearer, and burlesquing that august person's solemn gait. Voltaire filled his letters with infinite pleasantries about the new Capuchin, and seemed as much pleased at the idea of wearing the cord of Saint Francis, as he had been with the gold key of a Prussian chamberlain. One of his first enjoyments was to write letters to his episcopal foe, signed with a cross and his name: "✠ *Voltaire, Capucin indigne.*" A story is told by Grimm of a visitor arriving at Ferney, and being greeted by the patriarch with the news that he would find his host a changed man. "One grows a bigot in one's old age; I have a habit of having some pious work read to me when I sit down at table." And in fact, some one began to read a sermon of Massillon, Voltaire throwing in exclamations on the beauty, eloquence, imagination of the preacher. Suddenly after three or four pages, he called out "Off with Massillon!" and launched forth during the rest of the meal with his usual verve and fanciful extravagance of imagination. It is profoundly unedifying, but not the less characteristic.

Voltaire, there can be little doubt, never designed a social revolution, being in this the representative of the method of Hobbes. His single object was to reinstate the understanding in its full rights, to emancipate thought, to extend knowledge, to erect the standard of critical common sense. He either could not see, or else, as one sometimes thinks, he

closes his eyes and refuses for his part to see, that it was impossible to revolutionize the spiritual basis of belief without touching the social forms, which were inseparably connected with the old basis by the strong bonds of time and a thousand fibres of ancient association and common interest. Rousseau began where Voltaire left off. He informs us that in the days when his character was forming, nothing which Voltaire wrote escaped him, and that the "Philosophical Letters," that is, the "Letters on the English," though assuredly not the writer's best work, were what first attracted him to study, and implanted a taste which never afterwards became extinct. The correspondence between Voltaire and the prince of Prussia, afterwards the great Frederick, inspired Rousseau with a passionate desire to learn how to compose with elegance, and to imitate the coloring of so fine an author. Thus Voltaire, who was eighteen years his elder, gave this extraordinary genius his first productive impulse. But a sensibility of temperament, to which perhaps there is no parallel in the list of prominent men, impelled Rousseau to think, or rather to feel, about the concrete wrongs and miseries of men and women, and not the abstract rights of their intelligence. Hence the two great revolutionary schools, the school which appealed to sentiment, and the school which appealed to intelligence. The Voltairean principles of the strictest political moderation and of literary common sense, negative, merely emancipatory, found their political

outcome, as French historians early pointed out, in the Constituent Assembly, which was the creation of the upper and middle class, while the spirit of Rousseau, ardent, generous, passionate for the relief of the suffering, overwhelmed by the crowding forms of manhood chronically degraded and womanhood systematically polluted, came to life and power in the Convention and the sections of the Commune of Paris which overawed the Convention.

"It will not do," wrote d'Alembert to Voltaire as early as 1762, "to speak too loudly against Jean Jacques or his book, for he is rather a king in the Halles." This must have been a new word in the ears of the old man, who had grown up in the habit of thinking of public opinion as the opinion, not of markets where the common people bought and sold, but of the galleries of Versailles. Except for its theology, the age of Louis XIV. always remained the great age to Voltaire, the age of pomp and literary glory, and it was too difficult a feat to cling on one side to the Grand Monarch, and to stretch out a hand on the other to the "Social Contract." It was too difficult for the man who had been embraced by Ninon de l'Enclos, who was the correspondent of the greatest sovereigns in Europe, and the intimate of some of the greatest nobles in France, to feel much sympathy with writings that made their author king of the Halles. Frederick offered Rousseau shelter, and so did Voltaire; but each of them disliked his work as warmly as the other. They did not

understand one who, if he wrote with an eloquence that touched all hearts, repulsed friends and provoked enemies like a madman or a savage. The very language of Rousseau was to Voltaire as an unknown tongue, for it was the language of reason clothing the births of passionate sensation. Emile only wearied him, though there were perhaps fifty pages of it which he would have had bound in morocco. It is a stale romance, he cries, while the "Social Contract" is only remarkable for some insults rudely thrown at kings by a citizen of Geneva, and for four insipid pages against the Christian religion, which are simply plagiarized from Bayle's centos. The author is a monster of ingratitude and insolence, the arch-scoundrel and chief of charlatans, the lineal descendant of the dog of Diogenes the cynic, and other evil things not readily to be named in a polite age. Partly no doubt this extreme irritation was due to the insults with which Jean Jacques had repulsed his offers of shelter and assistance, had repudiated Voltaire's attempts to defend him, and had held up Voltaire himself as a proper object for the persecutions of Geneva. But there was a still deeper root of discrepancy, which we have already pointed out. Rousseau's exaggerated tone was an offence to Voltaire's more just and reasonable spirit, and the feigned austerity of a man whose life and manners he knew, assumed in his eyes a disagreeable shade of hypocrisy. Besides these things, he was clearly apprehensive of the storms which Rousseau's

extraordinary hardihood had the very natural effect of raising in the circles of authority, though it is true that the most acute observers of the time thought that they noticed a very perceptible increase of Voltaire's own hardihood, as a consequence of the example which the other set him.

The rivalry between the schools of Rousseau and Voltaire represents the dead-lock to which social thought had come; a dead-lock of which the catastrophe of the Revolution was both expression and result. At the time of Voltaire's death there was not a single institution in France with force enough to be worth a month's purchase. The monarchy was decrepit; the aristocracy was as feeble and impotent as it was arrogant; the bourgeoisie was not without aspiration, but it lacked courage and it possessed no tradition; and the Church was demoralized, first by the direct attack of Voltaire and the not less powerful indirect attack of the "Encyclopædia," and second by the memory of its own cruelty and selfishness in the generation just closing. But Voltaire's theory, so far as he ever put it into its most general form, was that the temporal order was safe and firm, and that it would endure until criticism had transformed thought and prepared the way for a régime of enlightenment and humanity. Rousseau, on the contrary, directed all the engines of passion against the whole temporal fabric, and was so little careful of freedom of thought, so little confident in the plenary efficacy of rational persuasion, as to insist

upon the extermination of atheists by law. The position of each was at once irrefragable and impossible. It was impossible to effect a stable reconstitution of the social order until men had been accustomed to use their minds freely, and had gradually thrown off the demoralizing burden of superstition. But then the existing social order had become intolerable, and its forces were practically extinct, and consequently such an attack as Roussseau's was inevitable, and was at the same time and for the same reasons irresistible. To overthrow the power of the Church only was to do nothing in a society perishing from material decay and political emasculation. Yet to regenerate such a society without the aid of moral and spiritual forces, with whose activity the existence of a dominant ecclesiastical power was absolutely incompatible, was one of the wildest feats that ever passionate sophist attempted.

If, however, it must be admitted that each of these two famous destroyers was attempting an equally desperate task, it is the contention of these pages that Voltaire was the more right and far-sighted of the two in his perception of the conditions of the problem. We have now for various adequate reasons acquired the habit of looking upon the Church and speaking of it, as an organization outside of society, or at least as a separate organization and independent integer within. The truth is that in a Catholic country like France before the Revolution, the Church more than the secular order actually was

the society, as it had been, though to a far wider degree, throughout Europe in the days of Hildebrand and Innocent. That is to say, it furnished the strongest of the ideas, sentiments, hopes, and associations which bound men together in a single community. The monarchy, the nobles, the old historic French tradition, the various bodies and processes of law, were swept away by the Revolution, virtually never to return in spite of the transient appearances to the contrary. The Church was swept away also, but only for a year or two; and so little effectual was the Revolution, which was in fact Rousseau's Revolution, in permanently modifying its position, that those Frenchmen at the present day who most soberly judge the future of their country and look deepest into its state, clearly perceive that the battle to be fought in the order of ideas is a battle between the new moral and social ideas of the workmen, and the old moral and social ideas which Catholicism has implanted in the breasts of the peasants, and on which the middle class privately and unconsciously lean for the support of their own consciences, though they may have put away Catholic dogma. We may see here, once more, the help which Protestantism gave to the dissolution of the old society, by the increased room it gave, apart from the specific influence of a more democratic dogma, for that gradual intellectual expansion throughout a community, which for those who have faith in the reasoning faculty is the one sure secret of social

advance. The subjection of the spiritual power to the temporal, which has commonly followed the establishment of the Protestant communion, has very likely retarded the final disappearance of many ideas which foster anti-social tendencies; but the subjection of the spiritual power in such a set of circumstances has the effect of softening shocks. Protestantism in the sixteenth century, if it could have been accepted in France, would have been a more edifying dissolvent than Voltairism was in the eighteenth; but it is certain that the loosening of theological ideas and the organization connected with them and upholding them, was the first process towards making truly social ideas possible, and their future realization a thing which good men might hope for. Napoleon, the great organ of political reaction, knew what he was about in paying writers for years to denigrate the memory of Voltaire, whose very name he abhorred.

In saying, however, that Rousseau's attack was inevitable, we have perhaps said that it was indispensable; for where a society is not able to resist an assault upon its fundamental conditions, we may be tolerably sure that the time has arrived when either these conditions must be dispersed, or else the society must fall into rapid dissolution. We may refute Rousseau's sophisms as often and as conclusively as we please, and may dwell as forcibly as we know how upon the untold penalties which France has paid, and is still doomed to pay, for whatever

benefits he may have bestowed on her. But after all this, the benefits remain, and they may be briefly set down as two in number. In the first place he spoke words that can never be unspoken, and kindled a hope that can never be extinguished; he first inflamed men with a righteous conviction that the evils of the existing order of things reduced civilization to a nullity for the great majority of mankind, and that it cannot for ever be tolerable that the mass should wear away their lives in unbroken toil without hope or aim, in order that the few may live selfish and vacuous days. Rousseau presented this sentiment in a shape which made it the "negation of society;" but it was much to induce thinkers to ask themselves, and the bondsmen of society to ask their masters, whether the last word of social philosophy had been uttered, and the last experiment in the relations of men to one another decisively tried and irrevocably accepted. Second, by his fervid eloquence and the burning conviction which he kindled in the breasts of great numbers of men, he inspired energy enough in France to awaken her from the torpor as of death which was stealing so rapidly over her. Nobody was more keenly aware of the presence of this breath of decay in the air than Voltaire was. It had seized such hold of the vital parts of the old order, that, but for the fiery spirit and unquenchable ardor of the men who read Rousseau as men of old had read the gospel, but for the spirit and ardor which animated the Convention, and made it alike

in the tasks of peace and the tasks of war one of the most effective and formidable assemblies that the world has ever beheld, we do not see what there was to stop France from sinking lower and lower into impotence, until at last the powers who vainly threatened the republic with partition, might in the course of time actually have consummated the threat against the monarchy. This may seem impossible to us who live after the Revolution and after Napoleon; but we must remember the designs of partitioning Prussia in the middle of the century, the accomplishment of a partition of the Italian possessions of the house of Austria in 1735, and the partition of Poland; and why was France to be eternal, any more than the Byzantine Empire, or the power of the house of Austria, or the power of Spain, had been eternal? It was the fire kindled by Rousseau's passion that saved her; for even of the Constituent, which was Voltairean, the very soul was Mirabeau, who was Rousseauite.

It will be seen that in one sense Rousseau was a far more original personage than his first chief and inspirer. He contributed new ideas, of extremely equivocal and perilous character, but still new, to the multitudinous discussions which were throwing all the social elements into confusion. These ideas might indeed have been found substantially in the writings of previous thinkers like Montaigne and Locke; but Rousseau's passion invested them with a quality which was virtually to constitute them a

fresh and original force. Voltaire contributed initiative and a temperament, which made his propagation of ideas that were not new, as important a fact in social if not in intellectual history, as if he had been possessed of superlative gifts in speculation. This has also to be remembered when we think of comparing him with Diderot, who, while his equal in industry, was greatly his superior both in fresh simplicity of imagination, and in grasp and breadth of positive knowledge. Whoever will take the trouble to turn over some of the thirty-five volumes of the "Encyclopædia," may easily see how that gigantic undertaking (1751-1765), in which Voltaire always took the most ardent and practical interest, assisted the movement that Voltaire had commenced. It seemed to gather up into a single great reservoir all that men knew, and this fact of mere mechanical collocation was a sort of substitute for a philosophic synthesis. As Comte says, it furnished a provisional rallying-point for efforts the most divergent, without requiring the sacrifice of any points of essential independence, in such a way to secure for a body of incoherent speculation an external look of system. This enterprise, the history of which is a microcosm of the whole battle between the two sides in France, enabled the various opponents of theological absolutism, the Voltaireans, Rousseauites, atheists, and all other sorts and conditions of protesting men, to confront the Church and its doctrine with a similar semblance of organic unity

and completeness. The "Encyclopædia" was not simply negative and critical. It was an unexampled manual of information, and was the means of spreading over the country some knowledge of that active scientific culture, which was producing such abundant and astonishing discoveries. The two streams of dissolvent influences, negative criticism on the one hand, and positive knowledge and scientific method on the other, were led into a single channel of multiplied volume and force. There was no real nor logical connection between the two elements, and while one of them has daily grown less serviceable, the other has daily grown more absorbingly powerful, so as now to be itself the effective indirect substitute for that direct negative criticism, with which the Encyclopædic design had once thrown it into alliance.

Diderot, the third chief of the attack, does even fuller justice than Rousseau to Voltaire's share in stimulating thought and opening the mind of France; and in spite of the extravagance of its first clause, there is a glimpse of true discrimination in the characteristic sentence — "Were I to call him the greatest man nature has produced, I might find people to agree with me; but if I say that she has never yet produced, and is never likely to produce again, a man so extraordinary, only his enemies will contradict me." This panegyric was specially disinterested, because Voltaire's last years had been not least remarkable for his bitter antipathy to the

dogmatic atheism and dogmatic materialism of that school with which Diderot was most intimate personally, and with whose doctrines, if he did not at all times seem entirely to share them, he had at any rate a warmer sympathy than with any other system of that negative epoch, when every chief thinker was so vague positively, so weak constructively, and only the subalterns, like d'Holbach and Helvétius, presumed to push on to conclusions.

The story of Voltaire's many long-sustained and unflagging endeavors to procure whatever redress might be possible for the victims of legal injustice, has been very often told, and mere commemoration of these justly renowned achievements may suffice here. "The worst of the worthy sort of people," he once said, "is that they are such cowards. A man groans over wrong, he shuts his lips, he takes his supper, he forgets." Voltaire was not of that temper. He was not only an extremely humane man; extraordinary vividness of imagination, lack of which is at the root of so much cruelty, and unparalleled sympathetic quality, thinness of which explains so much appalling indifference, animated him to a perseverance in protecting the helpless, which entitles him to a place by the side of Howard and the noblest philanthropists. There were three years in which the chief business of his life was to procure the rehabilitation of the name of the unfortunate Calas, and the payment of a money recompense to his family. He agitated the whole world with indig-

nation and pity by means of narratives, pleas, short statements and long statements, passionate appeals and argumentative appeals. Powerful ministers, fine ladies, lawyers, men of letters, were all constrained by his importunate solicitations to lend an ear to the cause of reason and tolerance, and to lift up an arm in its vindication. The same tremendous enginery was again brought into play in the case of Sirven. In the case of La Barre and his comrade d'Etallonde, his tenacity was still more amazing and heroic. For twelve years he persevered in the attempt to have the memory of La Barre rehabilitated. One of the judicial authorities concerned in that atrocious exploit, struck with horror at the thought of being held up to the execration of Europe by that terrible avenger, conveyed some menace to Voltaire of what might befall him. Voltaire replied to him by a Chinese anecdote. "I forbid you," said a tyrannical emperor to the chief of the tribunal of history, "to speak a word more of me." The mandarin began to write. "What are you doing now?" asked the emperor. "I am writing down the order that your majesty has just given me." There was a something inexorable as doom about Voltaire's unrelenting perseverance in getting wrong definitely stamped and transfixed. If he did not succeed in obtaining justice for the memory of La Barre, and in procuring for d'Etallonde free pardon, at least he never abandoned the endeavor, and he was just as ardent and unwearied in the twelfth year, as he had been

while his indignation was freshly kindled. He was more successful in the case of Lally. Count Lally had failed to save India from the English, had been taken prisoner, and had then in a magnanimous way asked his captors to allow him to go to Paris to clear himself from various charges, which the too numerous enemies he had made were spreading against his character and administration. The French people, infuriated at the loss of their possessions in India and Canada, were crying for a victim, and Lally, after a process tainted with every kind of illegality, was condemned to death by the parliament of Paris (1766) on the vague charge of abuse of authority, exactions, and vexations. The murdered man's son, known in the days of the Revolution as Lally Tollendal, was joined by Voltaire in the honorable work of procuring revision of the proceedings; and one of the last crowning triumphs of Voltaire's days was the news brought to him on his dying bed, that his long effort had availed.

The death of Lally is the parallel in French history to the execution of Byng in the history of England, and, oddly enough, Voltaire was very actively occupied in trying to avert that crime of our government, as well as the crimes of his own. He had known Byng when he was in England. Some one told him that a letter from Richelieu, who had been Byng's opponent at Minorca, would be useful, and Voltaire instantly urged the Duke to allow him to forward a letter he had, stating Richelieu's conviction of his

defeated enemy's bravery and good judgment. Voltaire insists that this letter turned four votes on the court-martial. He informs a correspondent, moreover, of the fact that Byng had instructed his executor to express his deep obligation both to Voltaire and Richelieu. Humanity is erroneously counted among commonplace virtues. If it deserved such a place, there would be less urgent need than, alas, there is, for its daily exercise among us. In its pale shape of kindly sentiment and bland pity it is common enough, and is always the portion of the cultivated. But humanity armed, aggressive, and alert, never slumbering and never wearying, moving like ancient hero over the land to slay monsters, is the rarest of virtues, and Voltaire is one of its master-types.

His interest in public transactions in his latest years was keener than ever. That fruit of Polish anarchy, the war between Russia and Turkey which broke out in 1768, excited his imagination to a pitch of great heat, and the despatch in the spring of 1770 of a squadron from Cronstadt, for the so-called liberation of Greece, made him weep for joy. He implored Frederick not to leave to Catherine alone the burden of so glorious a task. Superstition had had seven crusades; was it not a noble thing to undertake one crusade to drive the barbarous Turks from the land of Socrates and Plato, Sophocles and Euripides? Frederick replied very sensibly that Dantzic was more to him than the Piræus, and that

he is a little indifferent about the modern Greeks, who, if ever the arts should revive among them, would be jealous to find that a Gaul by his "*Henriade*" had surpassed their Homer; that this same Gaul had beaten Sophocles, equalled Thucydides, and left far behind him Plato, Aristotle, and the whole school of the Porch: — which was, perhaps, not quite so sensibly said.

The successes of Russia against Turkey in 1770 roused the anxiety of Austria and Prussia, and the solution of what we know as the Eastern question was indefinitely postponed by the device of partitioning Poland (August 5, 1772), the alternative to the acquisition of the whole of that country by Russia, the least civilized of the three powers. Of this memorable transaction Voltaire heartily approved, and he gave thanks that he had lived to see "such glorious events." He insisted, decidedly against the king's will, that Frederick had devised the scheme, for he found it full of genius, and to all seeming he discerned none of the execration which the event he had just witnessed was destined to raise in his own country in years to come. His friendship with two of the chief actors may have biassed his judgment; but Voltaire seldom allowed, indeed by the conditions of his temperament he was unable to allow, personal considerations of this kind to obscure his penetrating sight. He may well have thought the partition of Poland desirable, for the reasons which a statesman of to-day may find ade-

quate: the country's hopeless political anarchy, its crushing material misery, the oppressive power of the Church, the inevitable and standing peril to Europe of the existence of such a centre of conflagration. It is worth remarking that Rousseau was much more keenly alive to the gravity of the event, that he protested against what had been done, and that his influence has been one of the main causes of the illogical sympathy of democratic Europe for one of the most pestilent of aristocratic governments.

The accession of Turgot to power in 1774 stirred an ardent sympathy in Voltaire. Like the rest of the school, he looked upon this as the advent of the political messiah, and he shared the extreme hopes of that great and virtuous man's most sanguine lieutenants. He declared that a new heaven and a new earth had opened to him. His sallies against the economists were forgotten, and he now entered into the famous controversy of the free trade in grain with all his usual fire. His fervor went too far for the sage minister, who prayed him to be somewhat less eager in alarming uninformed prejudice. Still he insisted on hoping all things.

Contemple la brilliante aurore
Qui t'announce enfin les beaux jours.
Un nouveau monde est près d'éclore;
Até disparait pour toujours.
Vois l'auguste philosophie,
Chez toi si long temps poursuivie,
Dicter ses triomphantes lois.
* * * * * * *

Je lui dis: "Ange tutélaire
Quels dieux répandent ces bienfaits?"
"C'est un seul homme."

When it proved that one man alone, "qui ne chercha le vrai que pour faire le bien," was no match for the mountain torrent of ignorance, prejudice, selfishness, and usage, and Turgot fell from power (May, 1776), Voltaire sunk into a despair for his country, from which he never arose. "I am as one dashed to the ground. Never can we console ourselves for having seen the golden age dawn and perish. My eyes see only death in front of me, now that M. Turgot is gone. It has fallen like a thunderbolt on my brain and my heart alike. The rest of my days can never be other than pure bitterness."

The visit to Paris was perhaps a falsification of this prophecy for a moment. In 1778, yielding either to the solicitations of his niece, or to a momentary desire to enjoy the triumph of his renown at its centre, he returned to the great city which he had not seen for nearly thirty years. His reception has been described over and over again. It is one of the historic events of the century. No great captain returning from a prolonged campaign of difficulty and hazard crowned by the most glorious victory, ever received a more splendid and far-resounding greeting. It was the last great commotion in Paris under the old régime. The next great commotion which the historian has to chronicle is the ever-memorable fourteenth day of July, eleven

years later, when the Bastille fell, and a new order began for France, and new questions began for all Europe.

The agitation of so much loud triumph and incessant acclamation proved more violent than Voltaire's feeble health could resist, and he died, probably from an over-dose of laudanum, on the thirtieth of May, 1778. His last writing was a line of rejoicing to the young Lally, that their efforts had been successful in procuring justice for the memory of one who had been put to death unjustly. How far Voltaire realized the nearness of vast changes we cannot tell. There is at least one remarkable prophecy of his, in the well-known letter to Chauvelin: —"Everything that I see appears the throwing broadcast of the seed of a revolution, which must inevitably come one day, but which I shall not have the pleasure of witnessing. The French always come late to things, but they do come at last. Light extends so from neighbor to neighbor, that there will be a splendid outburst on the first occasion, and then there will be a rare commotion. The young are very happy; they will see fine things." A less sanguine tone marks the close of the apologue in which Reason and Truth, her daughter, take a triumphant journey in France and elsewhere, about the time of the accession of Turgot. "Ah, well," says Reason, "let us enjoy these glorious days; let us rest here, if they last; and if storms come on, let us go back to our well." Whether this meant much or little

none can know. It would be shallow to believe that such men as Voltaire, with faculty quickened and outlook widened in the high air to which their fame raises them, really discerned no more than we, who have only their uttered words for authority, can perceive that they discerned. Great position often invests men with a second sight whose visions they lock up in silence, content with the work of the day.

THE END.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
AA 001 047 214 0